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The Search For Authentic Identity In Three Novels By West Indian Author Earl Lovelace

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The Search for Authentic Identity in Three Novels

by West Indian Author Earl Lovelace
(TITLE)

BY

Todd A. Cornwell

THESIS

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the evolving concept of authentic identity, individual, cultural, and national in the post-colonial Caribbean context embodied in West Indian author Earl Lovelace's *The Schoolmaster*, *The Dragon Can't Dance*, and *Salt*. These three novels when analyzed together demonstrate Lovelace's emerging vision of a future for the Caribbean rooted in indigenous values, self-possession, historical reclamation, and, ultimately, true independence.

Additionally, this thesis explores Lovelace's paradox of the mask, in its many different physical and psychological forms, that simultaneously liberates and imprisons, and the consequences of masking on West Indian identity. In Lovelace's own words, these three novels confront the "uneasy fiction" of the "self we have for somebody else," and the crucial importance of "com[ing] home to [one's] self" (*Dragon* 119, 202, 146).

Lastly, this thesis attempts to clarify Lovelace's concept of a true multi-cultural community that recognizes, accepts, and builds upon the diverse human experiences that define the Caribbean. While the successive waves of colonial subjugation left behind an unprecedented historical mess, Lovelace clearly argues that such a fragmented and terrible history does not preclude the ability to construct an independent and authentic future for the island nations of the Caribbean.

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Introduction: Toward a West Indian Identity

Earl Lovelace represents a major force in the literary establishment of post-colonial West Indian authors working to identify, to understand and to establish an independent, authentic identity for the Caribbean citizen. The island nations of the Caribbean have complex layers of colonialism, slavery, indentured servitude and racial prejudice to sift through, to reclaim and to incorporate into their identity. While emancipation and independence afforded more opportunities for newly freed West Indians than in previous centuries, neither act truly set the people of the Caribbean free. In fact, years of ignoring and repressing the ugly history of the Caribbean and the unwillingness of those responsible to make reparations for the degradation of human exploitation cracked any foundation for a promising future. West Indians have been forced to accept second-class status in their own country while the fear of nothingness on which to build a concept of self through their introspection on a chaotic, fragmented history has fostered a need to mask in order to survive. Lovelace's aesthetic development in his novels *The Schoolmaster* (1968) through *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979) to *Salt* (1996) addresses and seeks individual, communal, cultural, political and national responsibility to break free from false identities which prevent historical reclamation, self-possession and the assertion of an authentic, creole identity. Lovelace uses the power of his prose to acknowledge

the problems that plague West Indian society and to develop his emerging vision for the future of the Caribbean.

In this thesis, I outline Lovelace's unfolding concept of an "authentic" Caribbean identity. While Lovelace clearly believes that the Caribbean cannot and should not simply shed the culturally defining Carnival mask which represents a vital cultural heritage and the potential for creation, he also asks West Indians to accept, to recognize and to capitalize upon the diverse human experiences which comprise Caribbean history and culture. The truly multicultural community that characterizes Trinidad and most of the other islands provides a resource for perpetual regeneration and for renewal through cultural hybridity and its formation through creolization. This resource, however, has been suppressed by years of masking core identity and shirking responsibility for cultural improvement. The mask that offers protection from colonial exploitation and releases pent-up resentment can retain its capacity for deception, but, after independence, it can also become a self-imprisoning, stagnant device of unintended self-deception. The mask that once served the hopes of liberation can, Lovelace implies, all too easily become unduly limiting in the contradictory roles of the mask which simultaneously releases and imprisons. Creolization can only succeed by breaking through self-confining prejudices and self-imposed detachment fostered by the masked identity contructed initially in order to protect a sense of self. This thesis elucidates Lovelace's evolving concept of authentic identity as investigated on three very

different levels in *The Schoolmaster, The Dragon Can't Dance,* and his most recent novel, *Salt.*

The Schoolmaster provides a starting point for Lovelace's examination of the Caribbean quest for communal and cultural identity. The novel exposes the destructive consequences of unrelenting and blind ambition to promote colonial education in the rural and isolated village of Kumaca. Despite cautionary advice from external counsel, the village administrators' myopia of inexperience prevents them from foreseeing and from understanding the inevitable complications of introducing a foreign, unfamiliar and volatile component into their culture. Several of the village elders reject the inherent beauty and defining value of their established way of life. Ultimately, Kumaca's unyielding and blind reverence for colonial education and the schoolmaster's unquestioning perpetuation of it as an avenue towards cultural enlightenment and progress corrupts their elemental and agrarian cultural values. *The Schoolmaster* represents a preliminary investigation of the effects of masking on communal and cultural identity, but the inherent conclusion of the novel seems to reorient the examination of false identity towards the individual. While Lovelace exposes the perils of cultural masking throughout *The Schoolmaster,* his emerging vision of establishing authentic identity points to the importance of the individual in the process. The individual characters in *The Schoolmaster* finally bear the ultimate responsibility for the consequences of their blind actions. The realization of the importance of "know[ing] how it is inside their own hearts"

becomes the focus of attention in Lovelace's emerging if somewhat naive vision of authentic identity *(Schoolmaster* 169).

In *The Dragon Can't Dance,* Lovelace wrestles with the complicated predicament of Carnival that both distinguishes and imprisons West Indian culture and the individual. The novel explores the cultural ramifications of the pre-Lenten festival of Carnival, which not only provides the Caribbean with an opportunity to demonstrate its ingenuity, creativity and artistry, but which also deters West Indians from pursuing individual and self-actualized identities. *Dragon* confronts the contradictory roles of masking which simultaneously releases and imprisons. Clearly, Lovelace does not dismiss the culturally defining Carnival mask, but he outlines a new concept for its use that incorporates the historical and rich meaning of the mask into self-possession. Lovelace introduces numerous characters in *Dragon* that exist behind false identities and who completely miss "what life is, and who we fighting and what we fighting for" (*Dragon* 124). (Please note that all further citations will preserve Lovelace's use of Standard West Indian English as well as his rendering of local patterns of dialect.) The ability to build a meaningful future with a clear sense of national identity begins with the individual, but it does not end there. The political bodies responsible for leading the people must not gloss over the differences from other colonized peoples that are inherent in and specific to the Caribbean, but rather must acknowledge and embrace the struggle of the diverse peoples whose colonial experience has no indigenous origin to unite for a clear

sense of individual and cultural identity. Subsequent waves of Spanish, French, Dutch and British colonial conquest in the West Indies, the enslavement of Africans and the indentured immigration of East Indians along with more recent immigration of Chinese and Middle Eastern peoples leave no "traditional" culture or place on which to build an emerging, independent culture. Only the hybridity of self and culture in the aesthetic of creolization offers a path to the reclamation of the fragments of history toward the formation of a truly Caribbean culture and person. Lovelace's vision of Caribbean "authentic" (hybrid) identity moves to an examination of the postcolonial "leaders [who] don't want things to change because confusion keep them in power" (*Salt* 190). What begins in *The Schoolmaster* as a paradoxical mask of simultaneous communal "tradition" and impotence and continues in *The Dragon Can't Dance* as an individual mask of paradoxical liberation and self-imprisonment now becomes—in *Salt*—the mask of the national paradox of "unity" and incompetence.

Salt, which tends to glide between the periods of colonial rule and independence in a single paragraph, directs attention towards the essential step of reparation before cultural definition and integration. The cast of dozens introduced in the book tells stories of loss and repression which entwine to form a much fuller and more accurate narrative of the Caribbean than the earlier novels. Additionally, Lovelace denounces, almost didactically at moments, the misdirected attempt of the People's National Movement to "cut across race and

religion, class and colour" and "emphasi[ze] united action by all the people in the common cause" (Brereton 234). Indeed, the novel exposes the perils of political masking and the inadequacy of the cultural mantra "all o' we is one!" In *Salt*, Lovelace reveals the necessity of acknowledging, reclaiming and liberating one's sense of loss from years of cultural and personal repression before building and declaring cultural identity.

These three novels operate together to create a comprehensive story of a culture fighting to reclaim a fragmented history, to create a sustainable future and to establish and to assert an independent, authentic identity. While Lovelace addresses the different levels of responsibility in building a meaningful future, most often he gives voice to the individual as an aesthetic technique of individuation that celebrates the indispensable value and contribution of the individual identity in shaping collective identity. Thus, I rely heavily on analyses of individual characterization to shape my argument concerning Lovelace's notion of "com[ing] home to [one's] self," for I believe that the Caribbean's socio-cultural history resides in the individual characters and their relationships in Lovelace's texts (*Dragon* 146). The process that he implies unfolds toward genuine freedom for self and society in a threefold manner, and each of the following chapters carefully examines the individual, communal and governmental responsibility for the future of the Caribbean.

The Fall of Kumaca

Lovelace opens *The Schoolmaster* with a description of Kumaca, a small, isolated, Trinidadian village where "the water is clear, and in places, ice cold [and where] the soil is rich, deep and black" (3). The portrait of the land, however, quickly gives way to an account of the people of Kumaca "whose needs are simple, desires few, whose women burn dried wood in firesides made of clay, [and where] money is a great something" (*Schoolmaster* 3). The remoteness of Kumaca has helped the villagers preserve a way of life which "that big, fast and terrible city that is Port-of-Spain" threatens to eradicate and whose effects even Kumaca's neighboring towns of Valencia and Zanilla have begun to feel *(Schoolmaster* 4). The village's resistance to progress and to change has sheltered Kumaca's seemingly idyllic existence, allowing for a perpetuation of a tradition that defined its ancestors and which actively links them to their cultural heritage. The fragile shell of conventionalism, however, cannot withstand the ever increasing pressure of change, and the village landowners, who also constitute the village administrators, recognize a need to acknowledge and possibly to assimilate the force of progress that constantly encroaches on their existence. Indeed, several of the village boys have already departed for the neighboring towns and the capital city of Port-of-Spain that provide a stream of activity and amenities like movie houses, rum shops, jobs besides cocoa harvesting, and "city" women. The prominent village representatives recognize

Kumaca's precarious position, and the overwhelming fear of nothingness which consumes the characters in the novel ultimately drives the village administrators to promote blindly colonial education as the avenue to personal advancement and cultural enlightenment.

In setting the stage for the council's debate concerning the necessity of a school, Lovelace exposes the consequences of resisting change and maintaining old, hollow identities which no longer define but rather parody and which undoubtedly trouble the village administrators. First, Lovelace introduces the character of Miguel.

> In the old days, Miguel had owned some good cocks that had won many battles both in Valencia and Kumaca, but now, although he loved the cockfights as passionately, his cocks were badly trained, and too slow and the battles they won were few and far between.
>
> (*Schoolmaster* 5)

Nonetheless, Miguel clings to a departed identity which once granted him respect and admiration but now provides those of the younger generation such as Pedro Assivero opportunity for mockery. Miguel "liv[es] on memories of those days only he can remember when he owned the king of all gamecocks," an undefeated cock named Hawk who ruled the cockfights and clearly represented Miguel's skill in training fierce, fighting birds (Ramchand 9). Unwilling to accept the inevitable overthrow of his presumed status, whether legitimate or not, Miguel sulks in his defeat and finds solace in his bold proclamation that he will

raise another cock equally as fierce as Hawk that will once again rule the *gayelle* [the fighting ring]. Miguel refuses to admit the change that has redefined his life and rests tenuously on the fame that once defined him, but that same fame now confines him.

Pedro's own father, however, wrestles with a similar fate. Francis Assivero is a drunk whose past gambling successes in cockfighting haunt his life. At one time, Francis "would go to Valencia at the head of the team of cockfighters, and he was very brave, and they say he bet too heavy, and first he was lucky," but, like many who discover the intoxication of luck and success, Francis "would not" and could not "stop" (*Schoolmaster* 9). Francis bets his entire fortune away, leaving his family to struggle to survive, not even leaving enough money to obtain medical attention for his son Robert, who deteriorates progressively from polio throughout the novel. His accomplishments, exactly like Miguel's, comprise a selfhood that once commanded recognition, but, when the successes which define Francis stop, the self that had been constructed upon the unstable foundation of external perceptions collapses. Again, unable to accept the change that surrounds him, Francis imprisons himself in a world of perpetual loss and "dies daily inside himself, because he knows... and remembers the man he was" (*Schoolmaster* 10).

The village executors seem to understand the devastating effects of stagnation as evidenced in their own citizens, and, consequently, they react to their life of idyllic simplicity as that which precludes cultural progress and

change. The debate concerning a school in Kumaca quickly takes center stage in the novel, and the economically prominent citizens enter into the universal debate between traditionalism and modernism. Paulaine Dandrade, estate owner, argues vehemently on the side of modernism and appeals to the people, with the argument that "today all about this country people are learning to read and write, but in Kumaca we do not have a school" (*Schoolmaster* 13). Dandrade attempts to frighten the people of Kumaca with his assessment that "we remain backward in this place" and that "the world is moving forward. Like a fist the world is closing around Kumaca" (*Schoolmaster* 13). He continues to cite hypothetical examples of how the lack of formal, colonial education in the village will disadvantage the younger generation and leave the children deserted in a world they can neither understand nor negotiate. Finally, Paulaine rejects unequivocally the historical value of "liv[ing] as our fathers live[d]" because "they are dead and their time gone" (*Schoolmaster* 14). Paulaine champions blindly colonial education as the engine to push them "forward" without fully considering the ramifications of introducing "into their own lives a kind of happening which they are not accustomed to" and abandoning a historical and defining way of life (Ramchand 10).

Dardain, the shopkeeper, an "economic serpent" who preys on the villagers' illiteracy by altering their accounts, also wholeheartedly endorses the need for a school (Ramchand 9). His participation in the mask of communal "progress," hence, cloaks the irony of his utter self-interest in giving voice to

platitudes. He reiterates the cry "for the good books to educate the people in the right and proper way" (*Schoolmaster* 15). Consantine Patron, however, who stays aloof throughout the novel because he feels that "it is good for someone to remain on the outside and see how things are going," knows from experience that "if Dardain supported the building of the school it was certain that he had already worked out a means of making some big gain for himself out of it" (*Schoolmaster* 94 & 16).

Consantine Patron supplies the necessary voice of caution despite his personal fear of losing currency as the town's "man of letters" with the institution of education. Although he begins in a stance of rational evaluation, he abdicates his own power of literacy when greeted with indifference by withdrawing into his own mask of detachment, made of silence, acquiescence and elitism. While Patron prefaces his barrage of questions by noting that he does not "say that a school is not a good thing," he also believes that Kumaca needs to consider some important questions:

> When everybody goes to school, who will pick the cocoa? Who will go for the wood to make the fire to cook the food that we must eat? And, who will teach in the school? And where will we build the school? Who will pay for the building? Do we have money to pay? And will we have to pay to learn in the school? Who will pay the schoolmaster? Where will he live? Is he to come outside of Kumaca? And who in Kumaca knows how to teach? And if he is

> to come from outside, he cannot travel everyday because of the bad road. What to do? (*Schoolmaster* 16)

Indeed, Patron raises legitimate logistical questions, some of which Dandrade answers by personally donating land, and others which the church ultimately answers by sponsoring both the school and the schoolmaster; several of his questions, however, concerning interruption of daily routine and, hence, the rupture of tradition, remain unacknowledged. Unfortunately, Patron isolates himself because of his dissenting opinion and withdraws increasingly behind a mask of detachment, neglecting his responsibility as a citizen of Kumaca to maintain his counter opinion at town functions and meetings.

Near the conclusion of the debate, the village administrators determine that they need external counsel and support to both fund and to build a school, and they elect the two primary representatives from the opposing points of view, Dandrade and Patron, to journey to Zanilla and seek Father Vincent's advice. Patron, however, already withdrawn behind his mask of detachment, declines the offer on the pretense of business and, thus, Dandrade, the zealous and blind supporter of the proposition for a school, goes to see Father Vincent.

The same gripping fear of nothingness which forces Miguel and Francis Assivero to sustain hollow identities compels Dandrade to find a means to build the school so as to prevent Kumaca from slipping into the same state of stagnation as some of its own citizens. Thus, when Dandrade finally knocks on Father Vincent's door, he does so not with the intention of considering advice but

with the determination to succeed in procuring unconditional support for the proposition of a school in Kumaca. Father Vincent, however, immediately and instinctively senses the fear of nothingness, for he chose his profession "believing that in that choice he could reduce the nothingness," both in his own life and in those of others (*Schoolmaster* 19). From the experience in his life when he "made a choice" because "everything in his life seemed ordinary and uninspiring," Father Vincent knows that the fear of nothingness masks itself as a blind pursuit for identity such as Dandrade's ardent request for a school (Ramchand 15). Quickly, Father Vincent attempts to refute Dandrade's arguments about the benefits of literacy by citing the example of Zanilla where "the Church finds that there is more sin, and much more in the city where the people do so well with letters and newspapers" (*Schoolmaster* 20). Dandrade, however, did not travel to Zanilla to debate the consequences of literacy, so, the priest shifts his argument from the abstract to the tangible and, consequently, to the much more personal.

Father Vincent wants desperately to save the endangered values that Kumaca represents, and he tries to prove to Dandrade that Kumaca's people are "simple... good people... [with] a way of life that is related to [their] economic and social situation" (*Schoolmaster* 20-21). Recognizing that Dandrade's quest for new identity blinds him from accepting the inherent value of Kumaca's historical heritage, Father Vincent follows his initial appeal with successive blows to the mask. He asks Dandrade if Kumaca is prepared to abandon, to "complete[ly] break away from traditional ways" and if Kumaca is prepared "for

the changes which a school is sure to bring about" (*Schoolmaster* 21). To solidify his point, Father Vincent prophesizes that "there will be consequences of which now we cannot even imagine... [for Kumaca] has grown up in a tradition which is not easy to break, nor perhaps wise to break" (*Schoolmaster* 21-2).

At this point in the consultation, Dandrade becomes quietly enraged and asks Father Vincent if he thinks of the people of Kumaca differently than his other parishioners and if he thinks Kumaca's "people not good enough to learn to read and write" (*Schoolmaster* 22). In a last ditch effort to find the endorsement for which he came, Dandrade challenges Father Vincent's authority and says "maybe I should go to see the bishop and ask him," then he stands in preparation to leave (*Schoolmaster* 22). In an attempt to summarize all that he has argued, Father Vincent professes—seemingly with no awareness of his own irony in that the "tradition" of Kumaca is also the product of colonization—that

> Kumaca is simple and beautiful. Your people are good, honest, simple, hard-working, and in the season, God willing, your crop is good. Maybe you are not learned like the doctors and lawyers of the city, but you believe in the Virgin, and in the Father and in His Son who died for us all. You live happy, with your problems which are not too big for you to solve. Maybe it is a good thing that you are so cut off from the outside world. (*Schoolmaster* 22)

But Dandrade knows and is correct in his assertion that "the time will come when the road from Valencia will be open, and there will be a different Kumaca"

(*Schoolmaster* 22). Indeed, while the priest finds an uncorrupted simplicity, his ironic (and covertly racist) "simple[ness]," in Kumaca's way of life, Dandrade witnesses progress and change accelerate around his people and fears being trampled into nothingness by non-participation. While Dandrade wants to know why Father Vincent "talk[s] only of the bad things that will come out of the building of the school," the priest, finally, can only conclude with abstractions such as "I have seen too much of this world corrupted..." which Dandrade cannot understand and which Father Vincent cannot explain (*Schoolmaster* 23).

Kumaca receives the much sought after school, and, after only a few weeks of influence, the schoolmaster forms a town council, noticeably improves literacy, and pushes for the construction of a road from Valencia for the ease of travel and the associated economic prosperity. Dandrade points to all of the schoolmaster's accomplishments as validation of the correctness of his notion about the necessity of colonial education in Kumaca. In an awkward but insightful introduction of him, however, Dandrade's own daughter, Christiana, recognizes and feels, viscerally, the danger that the schoolmaster represents in his very eyes which "go over her like hands," and in his unbridled, manipulative, yet subtle ways which seep through in his "low and frighteningly personal voice," which he uses "as if he were alone with her" (*Schoolmaster* 48). Although his lust ultimately catches up with him, the schoolmaster feels justified in satiating his appetites, for he is the one who "lift[s]... [the] clumsy children [and] flatfaced villagers... [of] Kumaca out of its present poor state" with nothing

"in return" (*Schoolmaster* 52 & 120). Furthermore, the schoolmaster's mask of elitist superiority leads him to believe that "he not only discovered Kumaca, but had had it willed to him by some Sovereign of The Backward Regions" and should, therefore, use his conquered territory of Kumaca as he sees fit (*Schoolmaster* 140).

The dangerous combination of the schoolmaster's unchecked desires and Kumaca's complete deference to the schoolmaster, however, soon yields tragic consequences which Father Vincent's earlier admonishment foreshadowed. After employing Christiana as his assistant for some time, the schoolmaster rapes Christiana on an evening when she appears at his house, wet from the rain, to deliver a geography book to him. Knowing how strongly her father upholds the schoolmaster and that to divulge this reprehensible act to her father would force him to respond with murder, Christiana, Kumaca's explicit symbol of innocence as a young female Christ, "hold[s] it, this pain and rape... without even knowing what it was she was asking herself to bear" (*Schoolmaster* 86). Christiana's psychological stability quickly falters following the ordeal, and she begins to envision her deceased mother calling to her from a stone in the water which she follows, in a trance, to her death one evening. Following her inevitable suicide, Dandrade, the staunch supporter of the school, and the rest of Kumaca begin to understand Father Vincent's "misgivings about the value of progress... which involve[s] loss even as it affords gain" (Pyne 62). Their sense of idyllic innocence collapses, and Kumaca is left to rebuild from destruction.

The fear of nothingness, undoubtedly instilled by the colonizers' dehumanizing exploits through inscribing their racist sense of the "other's" inferiority, drives the people of Kumaca to search for an identity beyond the one offered by the "dependable coherence [and] certain clearly defined rhythm in which the village moves as a group" and which ties them intimately to their ancestors (Pyne 62). Colonial education seemed to offer a logical solution that would not only nurture independent, authentic identity, but also the "civilized" progress from which Kumaca had been excluded. Their myopia of inexperience leads them to think of school as a "clear-cut variety of simple pleasure" such as letter writing and newspaper reading without understanding the "loss" which always accompanies change (Pyne 62). Kumaca's mask of indifference for tradition, its bold pursuit of new identity and its "complete surrender to progressive impulses" unfortunately lead to a new experience of nothingness embodied in the corruption of innocence, in the suicide of Christiana (Pyne 65).

The subplot, or maybe the crucial plot, which lies in the exchanges between Benn, the donkey driver, and Father Vincent during his quarterly journeys to Kumaca "to shrive, baptize, marry and say Mass," (Igoe 20) anchors the pursuit of authentic identity in a subordinate aspect known as "*faith*, what one believes and believes in" (Brathwaite 122). Throughout the novel, Father Vincent "fights with himself all the time," wrestling with his beliefs and his faith in those beliefs. His untried, and, therefore, weak faith partially determines the fate of Kumaca, for when he wants to present his concerns about the introduction

of a school into Kumaca to his superior, the Bishop, he finds an inability to "articulate his fears, to raise the questions of the simplicity of the people and the possibility of their destruction" (*Schoolmaster* 31). As Brathwaite maintains in his review of *The Schoolmaster*, faith is of central importance because "lack of faith, lack of direction, faces the danger of formlessness," or, as the characters throughout the book call it, "nothingness" (122).

On the first trek to Kumaca, Father Vincent tries to spark conversation with Benn, whom he believes dejected and defeated. The dialogue moves to the topic of temptation when Father Vincent says he will pray for Benn not to be tempted by strong drinks which seem to be drowning Benn's ambition to proceed with life. Benn, however, replies that "a man has need of his temptations as he has need of a woman. How else is a man a man if he is not tempted? If he is not proved?" (*Schoolmaster* 29). Indeed, Benn's statement gains currency when shortly following this exchange Father Vincent, as a result of weak faith in himself and uncertainty about his direction, cannot firmly declare his beliefs about a school in Kumaca to the Bishop. Father Vincent has not passed his test, or overcome his own temptations, and his clay feet cannot support even his undecided position of possible resistance.

In a later exchange between the two, Father Vincent wants to know, of course, how Benn can continue to get drunk when he has a family he needs to consider. Benn explains, however, that he gets drunk for his family, because, he asserts, "I have these responsibilities, yes. But I must *be something*, somehow... I

must know myself, feel myself... I am afraid not to want to get drunk. Because it would mean that I give up, that I surrender to *be nothing*" (*Schoolmaster* 63, *emphasis added*). The fear of nothingness really represents the core issue behind Dandrade's action, Francis and Miguel's actions, even Father Vincent's actions. Dandrade fears that Kumaca will "be condemned to utter insignificance" by maintaining a way of life that defined their fathers, but that a school and progress will help Kumaca gain "dignity" and "independence" (Barratt, *Search* 64). Unfortunately, Dandrade possesses no basis to understand the nothingness of loss associated with change. While both the schoolmaster and Dandrade equate Kumaca's so called "backwardness" with nothingness to justify their actions, Dandrade, unlike the schoolmaster, at least possesses good—albeit, hasty—intentions.

Lovelace does not resolve the inextricably problematic relationship between progress, or change, and tradition, but he seems to offer a developing vision of how to direct the necessary quest for Caribbean authentic identity and possibly accommodate tradition from whatever sources it has been constructed. This quest, however, needs some stipulation in that the term *authentic identity* itself is problematic: Lovelace seems a bit naive in assuming that there is an essential self, a "core self," to be recovered or discovered or uncovered—the Taino (or Carib) and Arawak peoples and cultures, indigenous to the West Indies, no longer survive in Trinidad or to any extent elsewhere in the Caribbean. Such a quest would be akin to an American immigrant of Swedish or Senegalese

descent seeking his "authenticity" in Cheyenne or Seminole culture in the United States. Gareth Griffiths, in his analysis of representation of Australian Aboriginal culture "The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, Discourse and Social Practice," notes that the concept of "authenticity" often serves the media's authority of "objective" reporting of "the 'positions' and 'voices' of the indigene..." (71). Consequently, that same construction can also be used in opposition to discredit "the 'inauthentic' political activists [even those who are themselves aboriginals] whose claim is undermined...by a dismissal of their right to represent Australian Aboriginal culture in any meaningful way" (71). Griffiths does not so much discount "the powerful need of such [colonized] peoples to reassert their pre-colonized cultures and to struggle for the recuperation of their cultural difference and its resilience in and through the local and specific, "as he reveals how the term itself re-inscribes " a policy of assimilation which [is] aimed at the suppression of difference" (75-76), therein reaffirming the dominant colonial authority as the superior culture.

To grasp the necessity for Consantine Patron to speak, for example, is to understand how the speech of the colonized "is in some sense conditional upon the dominant discourse" (Griffiths 75). In the Caribbean, the "pre-colonized culture," created through indigenous genocide, African enslavement, European colonization, Asian immigrations, and more recent North and South American imperialism—indeed, a layering of exploitation and survival of the peoples from six continents, as such, as an *authentic culture* connoting some mythical purity,

does not, and has never, existed as, in Homi K. Bhabha's phrase, "a stable unitary assumption of collectivity" (34), for the presumed moral authority of the colonizer depends on the insistent erosion of stability and unity as soon as it begins to emerge in order to suppress difference and to repress resistance. Patron's mask of detachment is complicit with the very colonial paradigm of progress that he wants opened to difference. Lovelace, in a quest for authenticity in the Caribbean self, privileges those who speak to affirm their difference in what might be more accurately defined as the Caribbean *hybrid* self rather than the pejorative *authentic* self. Bhabha asserts that hybridity, Lovelace's sense, in other words, of "the authentic," the *creolized* self , "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (35). Had Christiana revealed her rapist, she would have destroyed her father Dandrade's authority, the very embodiment of colonial greed and power. Quite apart from sacrificial innocence, Christiana represents the colonial subject's failure to speak from hybridity, leaving her only death—itself emptied of meaning into nothingness.

The answer to destruction from the masks of nothingness and the path toward reconstructing identity by embracing the very creolization imposed on West Indians under successive layers of colonization lies in true community. While the schoolmaster, unquestionably, deserves considerable blame for Kumaca's fall, the other characters in the novel do not escape without culpability.

Dandrade receives fault for embarking on a journey for identity without recognizing his mask which separates him from the contradictory nature of true feelings. Father Vincent is guilty for allowing "formlessness" to have such a tremendous and direct effect on Kumaca. Dardain is guilty for the selfishness with which he conducts all activities including swindling the people of Kumaca with a clear conscience. One of the most quietly guilty characters in *The Schoolmaster*, however, is Consantine Patron, who isolates himself behind a mask of detachment because of his counter opinion. Patron represents the one person capable of intervening, or at least opening up the other side of the issue, "but he retreats into silence, turns himself into an observer," and leaves the destiny of Kumaca to be controlled by a zealot for progress (Ramchand 9).

Lovelace reveals the necessity of unmasked participation in and contribution to the community as the first step towards establishing an authentic, hybrid identity. The solipsistic and self-contained world of the mask precludes the ability to accept the polarities of a situation and demands unwavering commitment to one side. Dandrade's actions in the novel clearly demonstrate the one-sidedness of masked identities, but Consantine Patron's actions also subtly exhibit the same characteristics of masks. Patron cannot accept his position as both cautious opposition to the suggestion of the school and friend to Kumaca. Dandrade helps to create such an either-or fallacy during his tirade about Kumaca's "backwardness" and the world's progress, but Patron willingly accepts the fallacious dichotomy and isolates himself because of it. Thus, in

Lovelace's vision of pursuing authentic identity, the members of any community, either as small as Kumaca or as large as the Caribbean, must surrender false identities thoroughly re-inscribed with colonialist perceptions to the fullness of unmasked identities, to "the central concern of selfhood" (Ramchand 10). As Pyne states, Lovelace "makes the point that each individual has a role to play in his society and that only by selfless participation of each for the good of all can the entire community benefit" (63). Only unmasked identities possess the potential to integrate tradition *and* change, the true foundation to "authentic" identity.

Carnival: Masked Identity

While Lovelace clearly begins a preliminary investigation of the effects of masks on the pursuit of hybrid identity in *The Schoolmaster*, he unfolds a full exploration in *The Dragon Can't Dance*. Lovelace's emerging vision of the quest for authentic identity directs attention to self-discovery and to self-affirmation as prerequisites to establishing community or national identity. The search for true selfhood again dominates the theme of this novel. Because *The Schoolmaster* established the necessity of discovering and releasing individual core identity before working towards community identity, the primary thrust for authentic identity in *The Dragon Can't Dance* centers on the individual. Furthermore, Lovelace confronts the paradox of Carnival masking which simultaneously liberates and imprisons, especially as it relates to the lower economic classes. Carnival, as a forum for social commentary, criticism and defiance as well as an exhibition of indigenous artistry, gives Trinidad a truly individual national identity. *Dragon*, however, exposes the reality of Carnival as an economic institution and a battle against new, unidentifiable oppressors who stifle authentic identity. Furthermore, Lovelace examines the inherited sense of rebellion, not altogether understood by many of the characters, which often manifests itself as nothing more than idle threats embodied in such ritualized forms as the dragon dance. Thus "self-assessment" and "questioning" are key to the process of liberating core-identity (Jaggi 26). In this novel, Lovelace directs

attention to the consequences of aligning personhood with false identity, and he reveals the need to nurture awareness of individuality outside of the omnipresent national identity of Carnival.

Carnival was most likely exported to the islands of the Caribbean by a "white, French-Creole elite core of society" as "there is no evidence that Carnival existed on the island in any form before 1783" to the indigenous peoples (Koningsbruggen 12). During Carnival season, which extended from Christmas to Ash Wednesday, the French plantocracy threw balls, concerts, dinners and hunting parties. House visits, walks or rides in a carriage, music and dance, and fun and pranks were the main ingredients which contributed to a genuine Carnival atmosphere (Koningsbruggen 12). Simply put, Carnival functioned as a time for licensed indulgence prior to Lent and its extensive restrictions.

The British, who gain control of the island after 1797, became increasingly tense about the role of Carnival as "leveller of social distinctions" (Koningsbruggen 13). In examining the tension between the dominant classical aesthetic and the rise of the grotesque in the development of European Renaissance literature, Mikhail Bakhtin notes that the "essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from affirmation, from birth of something new and better" (62). During the freedom of Carnival season, "the white planters liked to disguise themselves as plantation negroes," while the "the (freed) negro slaves, performed a grotesque

drama in which the behavior of the elite during its refined dance parties was mocked" (Koningsbruggen 67). As long as "something new and better" from the enslaved Africans' point of view is not visible on the horizon, then "carnivalesque revelry is marked by absolute familiarity. Differences between superiors and inferiors disappear for a short time, and all draw close to each other. Nobody cares what may hapen to him, while freedom and lack of ceremony are balanced by good humor" (Bakhtin 246). In time, the irony of role reversal troubles the ruling classes in an increasingly tense social climate, for the slave and lower classes—weary of the parody of equality only "for a short time"—constitute—as they often do in oppressive social atmospheres—the majority of the population. Indeed, as role reversal in the Renaissance often invoked the switching between the clown and the king, the "king *is* the clown," hence the "thrashing and abuse" of the crown—the colonial authority (sometimes behaving as a clown) in this context—are the symbolic "equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis" in which the colonized can aptly see themselves as the new agency of power (Bakhtin 197). The oppressed almost seem aware of their not-so-distant emancipation, and this implicit resistance through social reversal only augments the threat to the governing bodies.

After Emancipation in 1834, Carnival passes into the hands of the lower classes and "changed into a noisy, wild and disorderly amusement, viewed with increasing disdain by the well-to-do and with suspicion by the authorities" (Koningsbruggen 16). Although Carnival provokes fears of rebellion, the

colonial government realizes that eliminating Carnival might produce the exact effect it fears and wishes to avoid. So Carnival continues. Charles Day offers a vivid picture of the ambiance of Carnival in post-emancipation years. He writes of some aspects of the 1848 Carnival that extend right into the pages of Lovelace's prose. Day writes of the "negroes, as nearly naked as might be, bedaubed with a black varnish" and of one member of the "street gang" who "had a long chain and padlock attached to his leg, which chain the other pulled" and of "the quarter-staff" that each mask was armed with "so that they could overcome one-half more police than themselves" (Koningsbruggen 68).

One hundred thirty-one years later Lovelace, too, writes of the time when "black men blackened themselves further with black grease to make of their very blackness a menace" and of the stickfighters who in later Carnival years would battle each other, as opposed to the police, in sport, accompanied by a ritualized dance "to keep alive the practice of warriorhood born in them" (*Dragon* 135). Of note here is not only that in "the world of carnival all hierarchies are cancelled," and "[a]ll castes and ages are equal" (Bakhtin 251), but also that Lovelace extends Bakhtin's analysis to Carnival in the racially-driven colonial context of genetic and moral superiority: the act of self-blackening an already black skin constitutes not only the legal freedom of Emancipation, but also self-affirmation of blackness on one's own terms—an act of "playful" violence to the master's narrative. In addition, the act of parodying the master-slave relationship as portrayed in the "chain and padlock" character continues on for years in Carnival history as a way

for "freed negroes [to] relive and commemorate the time of terrible oppression in a ritualized form" (Koningsbruggen 17). During this period, Carnival functions as "a collective expression of resistance against disenfranchisement" (Cager 228). Moreover, that individual parody of blackness and its subjugation becomes far more than a symbolic, silent gesture of individual protest, for, as Bakhtin asserts: "The heart of the matter is not in the subjective awareness but in the collective consciousness of their eternity, of their earthly, historic immortality as a people, and of their continual renewal and growth" (250). In contemporary practice, black Trinidadians now douse each other and tourists in used motor oil, participating in Carnival's parody of an oil-producing, independent nation beset by widespread poverty wherein the over-determined sign of self-affirming blackness connotes both the racist colonial legacy *and* postcolonial corruption and incompetence. To continue the masquerade without renewal in the postcolonial context is to engage in self-parody: the master always remains "just us" but without possibility for justice. To comply with self-governance when the self has no agency is self-parody; to challenge self-governance as an institution of self-interested elitists in collaboration with multinational oil companies is to offer agency to the hybrid self. Freed from the nothingness of self-parody, the masquerader becomes the life of the culture in his act of comic parody of the carnivalesque parody itself.

Circa 1860, Yard bands come to dominate Carnival. Koningsbruggen explains that "the outskirts of Port of Spain were (and largely still are)

characterized by a spontaneous accumulation of irregular settlements... and life went on in the common yard in the middle" (18). These yards ultimately produce bands of singers, dancers, masqueraders and stickfighters who would battle each other throughout the year and most intensely during Carnival season. In most cases the competition and stickfighting was "a relatively innocent Carnival activity, but it is evident from its nature that, if circumstances demanded, the carnivalesque aggression and rebellion could be transmuted into forms of violence" (Koningsbruggen 18). Stickfighting on some level was always a bloodsport, for stickfighters arose out of courage, strength and agility, but most often it was contained within local village culture. Thus, Nineteenth Century Carnival is "characterized by a complex combination of partly amorphous cultural events and anarchistic expressions of social discontent and rebelliousness... [which] can be found in later periods, but in a much less pronounced form" (Koningsbruggen 28).

Indeed, *The Dragon Can't Dance* seems to suggest that Carnival's "anarchistic expression" has rendered itself impotent in its capacity to fulfill its continual role in culture; that is,

> To consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from cliches, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted. This carnival spirit offers the chance to have

> a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things. (Bakhtin 34)

What concerns Lovelace is not "a much less pronounced form"of carnival spirit "with its freedom, its utopian character oriented toward the future" but its transformation "into mere holiday mood" in which "a new outlook" toward "a new order" is no longer possible (Bakhtin 33).

While the Carnival mask receives increasing censure from the government because it "made it difficult for the authorities to identify and prosecute the troublemakers and rioters," the mask never disappears, and "the relation between costume/mask and performance has remained fully intact in contemporary Carnival" (Koningsbruggen 69 & 71). *Dragon*, set in the 1970's, demonstrates not only the perpetuation of the masking tradition, but also the extension of the Carnival performance directly into everyday life. While the liberating qualities of the mask possess the ability to stimulate creative energies for renewal and definition, it affects quite the opposite with the characters of *Dragon* who live with "distort[ed] perception[s] of self" as a direct result of collapsing core-identity with Carnival persona (Thorpe 17). Thus Calvary Hill, the primary setting of *Dragon*, becomes a stage for the actors to masquerade, but not "to live and be human being[s]" (*Dragon* 37).

For example, Miss Cleothilda, queen of the Calvary Hill yard band, governs her empire of Cavalry Hill where "the sun set on starvation and rise on potholed streets" as if she truly deserves royal respect (*Dragon* 23).

> For the whole year here in the yard on Alice Street, Miss Cleothilda, the mulatto woman occupying the two front rooms upstairs the main house, [makes] a nuisance of herself to everybody, strutting about the yard with her rouged cheeks and padded hips, husbanding her fading beauty, flaunting her gold bangles and twin gold rings that proclaim that she was once married. (*Dragon* 31)

Miss Cleothilda, who "had been playing queen for the last eleven years,... kn[ows] that to her being queen was not really a masquerade at all, but the annual affirming of a genuine queenship that she accepted as hers by virtue of her poise and beauty" (*Dragon* 32). Cleothilda truly believes that she wields power on Calvary Hill and therefore sustains the right not only to "strut about the yard [and make] a nuisance of herself," but to "walk on her way home from market... [with] her nose lifted above the city" (*Dragon* 31). Cleothilda provides a paramount example of the character who has silenced her personal, historical hybrid identity in order to exist as her Carnival persona of Queen. She advantageously extends the domain of the mask directly into her life and accepts, wholly, her masquerade role as her year-round identity without ever considering her hybrid, core-identity. Lovelace, however, highlights the tension and dissonance that self-absorbed—and self-absorbing—masks create within a community when used for the purposes of self-definition much less community identity.

Because she accepts her masquerade role as "a genuine queenship," Cleothilda expects and demands respect, admiration and deference from the people in the Yard. Miss Olive, proud mother of Sylvia, the most menacing threat to Cleothilda's queenship, suffers from the expectations that Cleothilda has of others who maintain relationships with her. Cleothilda expects Miss Olive to appear upon vocal command and to shower her with affection and attention. Thus, with Carnival in the air, and new calypsos blaring from the few available radios in the yard, Miss Cleothilda dances out onto her veranda and shouts, "You hear rhythm, Miss Olive," who, although not present, appears quickly after being beckoned. Miss Olive drops her present task of washing clothes for "her everlasting bedlam of seven children" and "come[s] out into the yard at her call, dutiful as always, and witnesse[s] the performance" (*Dragon* 33).

As Miss Olive stands watching this display of "middle-aged sexiness" and seasonal friendliness, however, "she smile[s] in a bashful sort of suspicious way," wondering whether she would ever be able to ask Miss Cleothilda if she is "really crazy, or if this rush of friendliness is the first installment on her masquerade for Carnival day" (*Dragon* 34). Lovelace suggests that Cleothilda must make social payments for her created position as Queen in the Calvary Hill Band as it is not a position of genuineness, and she makes her "first installment" by making a show of friendliness and projecting a false feeling of community with Miss Olive, as exemplified in her ironic chant, "All o' we is one."

As Miss Olive continues to think about confronting Cleothilda, however, she worries that posing such a question might destroy her for "she had felt a sense of Miss Cleothilda's fragility... despite the harshness Miss Cleothilda projected throughout the ordinary year" (*Dragon* 34). Lovelace uses Cleothilda and her interaction with Miss Olive to demonstrate the "fragility" and instability of existence as a persona which "lack[s] human toughness to face *real life* as a *real person*" (*Dragon* 34, *emphasis added*). Cleothilda plays a role in her self-created world and, consequently, escapes any responsibility to face "real life" as a "real person." Lovelace returns regularly to the resentment that festers on Calvary Hill because "she ain't have nothing to make her wonder if what she doing is right, *if she living life as a human being,*" compounded by the feeling that "she ain't have no responsibility *to live* and *be a human being*" (*Dragon* 35-6, *emphasis added*). Lovelace clearly comments on the fact that the lack of responsibility afforded by the mask not only destroys any potential for true community, but also derails any attempt to embrace and to experience real life.

Miss Olive recognizes that to bombard her fictionalized world with such an offensive question would decidedly "unclothe, unveil Cleothilda, perhaps even to her own self," a major step which, although mandatory in the process of grounding authentic hybrid identity, Cleothilda has no desire to entertain (*Dragon* 34). At the same time, Miss Olive knows that "her own sense of self is tied up in the relationship as it exists," and to challenge Cleothilda's "sense of self" would force Miss Olive to reexamine her own "sense of self," an examination

she does not want to conduct either (Brydon 324). The false identities shield the characters from both meaningful self-examination and social responsibility.

Philo, Calvary Hill's Calypsonian, offers another example of one imprisoned by false identity; however, Philo perceives his mask near the conclusion of the novel and begins the necessary steps towards establishing an authentic if decidedly hybrid identity. For the first two hundred pages of *Dragon*, Philo does not appear much other than to attempt ascension into Queen Cleothilda's palace, of which she allows him "a three step a year quota" and which the Hill's people feel in "maybe fifteen [or] twenty more years [he'll] get in the room that she have her bed in, which is where he think he heading" (*Dragon* 36). Lovelace concludes the book, however, with a chapter predominately about him, entitled, "The Calypsonian," indicating Philo's importance in the emerging vision of self-possession.

The Calypso tradition "detached itself from the notorious reputation" and association with street gangs much earlier than other artistic forms such as steelbands. Calypsonians used their music as a stage for "social criticism, [which] repeatedly shocked the establishment" (Koningsbruggen 37). The history of the Calypso is immense, but historians believe the Calypso heritage "derive[d] from an older West African tradition of social commentary, in which praise, blame or derision were conveyed in song or folk tales" (Rohlehr 1). The Calypso's origins stem from social commentary, and Calvary Hill's calypsonian Philo, in the Calypso tradition, had been singing "year in and year out, about

how people hungry, how officials ain't doing their duty" (*Dragon* 127). Philo, however, loses faith in the political protests of the Calypso as he has not achieved his desires for notoriety and fame. Philo "want[s] to win the Calypso King crown, at least reach the finals one year, so [he] could say after this whole thing finish 'I was here'" (*Dragon* 127). As with the people of Kumaca, the consuming fear of nothingness drives individuals to abandon the rich meaning of their traditions and to reinvent their identities.

In an attempt to find recognition, Philo produces a new type of song which he shares with Aldrick, the band's dragon, but which he knows contradicts the Calypso's origins, and, therefore, he needs to justify. Philo explains to Aldrick that his new song, "'Axe Man' is not [his] style, [his] kinda song, [and he] ain't protesting again, [he] ain't singing against the bad things in the place," but he asserts that "you have to sing what the people want to hear" (*Dragon* 126). He tells Aldrick a little earlier in the conversation that "it don't mean I don't care, or that I give up the battle...it don't mean I surrender," but his defensive rationalizations point to the fact that it means exactly that. Philo abandons and forsakes the revolutionary energy of the Calypso tradition to write a "calypso about sexual, not social, potency [with] anger diffused into sexual innuendo" (James 15). He deserts a part of a Calypsonian tradition which had been lyrically attacking the establishment for years, writes 'The Axe Man' "filled with phallic symbolism and sexual overtones," and finds false identity in the cash and fleeting prestige that he had desired (*Dragon* 126).

When Philo fulfills his dreams of being a popular and affluent singer, he moves off Calvary Hill but returns regularly to display his new sportscar, his new flamboyant clothes and his new harem of women. His efforts at fame, however, have repressed his true self, and Aldrick senses Philo's false identity when he realizes "he didn't feel comfortable with him" anymore (*Dragon* 168). Although Aldrick cannot necessarily identify and articulate his specific feelings of discontent with Philo, he senses the change in him.

Philo, who seems to understand that he has "sold-out," consequently "decorates" himself with extravagant clothes, "as if he wanted to hide himself" (*Dragon* 169), as if he actively chose his flashy persona to hide and to distract others from the fact that he has sacrificed "personal integrity and social responsibility" (Jaggi 26). In fact, "to Aldrick, it seemed as if Philo's success had become almost a matter of apology" (*Dragon* 169). Philo's defensiveness unintentionally exposes his change, especially in his rationalization to Aldrick: "I ain't change... I is the same man. I is still Calvary Hill, no matter what you see me do" (*Dragon* 170). He knows that he acts differently and that he tries to exonerate himself with justifications, but Aldrick and the other "fellars" sense the origin of his excuses.

Then one day Philo visits the guys on the corner, and Fisheye, the Hill's misdirected and confused "bad john," tells Aldrick that Philo "not one of us," and that he knows Philo "come up here to fuck around, to show off, because he ain't have nobody else to show off his girls and his hat and his car to yet" (*Dragon*

172). Fisheye decides to enforce his opinion that he "just don't want him on the Hill" (*Dragon* 173). From that day on, as the title of the chapter indicates, Philo becomes an "outcast" on the Hill. Although Philo finds the riches and fortune he sought, the price of his false identity, his mask, costs him his friends, and, as he himself asks Aldrick, "What life for, man? What the struggle for if your friends leave you alone?" (*Dragon* 170).

This question plagues Philo's mind, for, by the end of the book, he begins to examine his masked identity. He sits on the veranda of his house one morning and asks himself "what he was doing there?" (*Dragon* 234). Philo reminisces about his childhood and the ridicule that he received from peers in school and how he fought them for a long time. One day, however,

> when he was tired fighting and getting beaten and being made the butt of the jokes among the boys who were no less black nor less Baptist nor poor than he, he surrendered [and] began to turn the jokes upon himself. (*Dragon* 240)

He gave himself the name Philo and assumed a mask of self-inflicted humiliation as protection against external assaults. This self-deprecating persona which provided him with a role identity, class clown, resurfaced when he swung his calypso lyrics toward innocuous, unpointed humor and sexual innuendos. In the new calypsos, Philo

> found a way in which he could affirm himself and survive. It emphasized for him the necessity to be *role* serious, not *real* serious,

> and brought him back to his own affirming irreverence that had seen him through his boyhood. (*emphasis added, Dragon* 245)

Philo's new calypsos buy him a place in the world, but they do so at a price that he had not anticipated. He rationalizes his actions by telling himself that "all he was doing was trying to get through, to make a space for himself in the world," but he made that space with his possessions, including women, among the suburban, middle class lifeless, also masked, whose men on Sunday mornings "come to the front of their houses, in short pants and with slippers on to wash down their cars and to exchange waves and smiles, a ritual in which they were secure only because everybody else performed it" (*Dragon* 246 & 227). He understands that his Calvary Hill ex-friends think of him as a traitor, but "traitor to what? To what cause? What did they want him to do?" (*Dragon* 246). Indeed, he did not recognize any direction or ambition in the guys hanging out on the corner, and he moved on and made a life for himself, but a life which Lovelace clearly condemns as it ceases to function productively for either self or community.

As this day of reflection progresses, Philo calls over one of his girlfriends, and with the catalyst of sexual release, Philo commences a rediscovery of his core-identity, perhaps even initiates the invention of his own hybridity, using conversation with his girlfriend as a space safe within its intimacy. Lovelace uses Philo's physical nakedness, as they lie together after sex, as an obvious symbol of Philo's temporary escape from persona, and "he felt kinda glad that he

was naked in full view of her and was naked to himself" (*Dragon* 249). It feels good to be free of those weighty, oppressive false identities, and Philo physically feels the release. He begins to tell her stories

> of his life, of his childhood, telling about his brother, Mello, who was a promising sportsman, good in every game, but slack, worthless, was stabbed to death by a woman, for what he never got to know. And about his sister who got saved and became Pentecostal and was a preacher, about another sister who went away to America and married a white fellar, and another one who married a policeman and lived in Tunapuna, of his roots, his family, his heritage, his core-identity. (*Dragon* 250)

Philo's openness contrasts so starkly with his previous "role seriousness" that she says, "You know, this is the first time you ever tell me anything about yourself" (*Dragon* 250). His feathered hat and shiny car had masked his core-identity well, but, without these possessions, Philo is naked and real, and he begins his journey towards creating and establishing an authentic identity.

The most important discovery in their conversation follows his recounting of his life and childhood. The girl finally says, "I thought you had no memories at all," and wants to know "how can a person not have memories" (*Dragon* 250). Philo's response reveals all the oppressive, stagnating and destructive power of masked existence. He says, while thinking of his mask of his "sell-out" calypsos, "We kill them... We murder them," realizing that his mask, his persona of class

clown and sexually omnipotent calypsonian, had slain all that truly defined him (*Dragon* 250).

The girl cannot understand how a person could live without memories, but Philo offers another insight into living behind masks. He says, "Copy, invent, imitate. I'm an imitator and an imaginator and fabricator. That is how I live here" (*Dragon* 250). Masks produce a reinvented identity to function properly, as Cleothilda's fabricated existence revealed. The girl is frightened at such honest divulgence and nakedness, however, and "pull[s] the covers over them" in a symbolic gesture of re-masking Philo to protect him from such exposure to the world, his life and himself, and to protect herself from witnessing such a painful metamorphosis that might provoke questions in herself. Philo, though, relishes his nakedness and rediscovery and says "No. Let me be naked before you" (*Dragon* 251).

Philo continues to think and realizes that he was not just trying "to make a space for himself in the world," that he had other options and that he has chosen to foster false identity. Suddenly, he decides, "I want to love. I want to live" (*Dragon* 251). He wants to experience "real life," to feel true emotion and to realize his hybrid, core-identity, so he decides to head back to Calvary Hill, his true home.

When he arrives he finds himself "overwhelmed by greetings," as if the "fellars" instantly sense his return to self and his desire to contribute meaningfully to his community. He begins to apologize to the guys, but, before

doing so, he decides that "maybe there is nothing to apologize for; the thing is to live and to grow on, not even to think that you could right wrongs, but grow on, take it from here" (*Dragon* 252). A calypso pops into his head concerning his realization, and then he thinks "maybe it was not a calypso, but a poem to be understood by being felt," indicating a new way of thinking, of living, and of pursuing self-possession.

While Philo at least examines his persona, which Cleothilda clearly does not, his success at self-possession seems a little too easy. The metamorphosis from persona to core-identity cannot be achieved in an afternoon. Nonetheless, Philo has completed a major step in the rediscovery process by recognizing and by removing his mask by the end of the novel, but his calypsos in the following year, and whether he honors the implied contract to act as the people's social commentator, will be the true testimony to his transformation.

The most penetrating and profound metamorphosis of all the characters in *Dragon* occurs in Aldrick, the King Dragon, who, as Lovelace said in an interview, "initiates a point of questioning," the primary step in releasing core-identity (Jaggi 26). Throughout the entire novel, Aldrick wrestles with the essence, purpose and principles of his identity and his weighty role as King Dragon, for "Once upon a time the entire Carnival was expressions of rebellion, [but now] the dragon alone was left to carry the message" (*Dragon* 135). The character and identity of Aldrick's mask dominates and eclipses his "real life" much like Cleothilda's Queen mask, but Aldrick questions the relevance of his

mask to "real life" almost as soon as *Dragon* begins; indeed, he "embodies the relentless search for personhood" (Barratt, *Metaphor*, 405).

Aldrick understands the oppressiveness of his mask at the beginning of the novel with the situation of his interest in Sylvia, Miss Olive's daughter, and his understanding that "she possessed, he suspected, the ability not only to capture him in passion but to enslave him in caring, to bring into his world those ideas of love and home and children that he had spent his whole life avoiding" (*Dragon* 45). Lovelace carefully uses the words *capture* and *enslave* to connote a type of threat, terms which Aldrick thinks in because "passion," "caring," "love," "home" and "children" all represent major threats to the stability of any mask, and especially the fierce, detached and severe dragon persona. Aldrick senses the potent, destructive powers of emotions and knows that caring for Sylvia could interrupt his sense of identity, "that she could make him face questions that he had inoculated himself against by not working nowhere, by not being too deeply concerned about anything except his dragon costume that he prepared for his masquerade on Carnival day" (*Dragon* 45). Lovelace reveals through the character of Aldrick that masks enable a lifelong detachment from emotion, relationships, and responsibility, and that personal and emotional interaction pose a threat of intrusion to an isolated existence. Sylvia holds the power to deliver Aldrick from his mask and to help him embark upon a journey towards self-discovery, but she simultaneously embodies a menacing threat to his present understanding of himself and of his life.

Aldrick possesses nothing in life, materially, mentally or spiritually, other than his dragon mask and identity, as exemplified in a conversation with Sylvia in which he informs her, "I have nothing here except my dragon costume to put on for Carnival" (*Dragon* 46). Aldrick can offer nothing to Sylvia, yet Sylvia does not seek possessions as much as genuine affection, which Aldrick's false identity will not allow him to express. In the course of the same conversation, Sylvia subtly forces Aldrick to reexamine his identity and his relationships. She tells him that despite the small size of his place, "even in there, you and somebody could live, if you love her" (*Dragon* 47). Aldrick, however, has not yet found a desire to deconstruct his mask and, consequently, declines Sylvia's implied offer.

As the conversation progresses, though, Sylvia sparks another important consideration for Aldrick in his contemplation of his identity. They discuss their costumes for Carnival, and, when they reach discussion of Aldrick's dragon mask, she points out that despite the visible, external changes to his mask annually, "in a way [it] is the same costume, the same dragon" every year (*Dragon* 47). Lovelace uses Sylvia as a mirror to reflect the stagnation of false identity and to expose the oppressiveness of masks "to any progressive inner meaning [of] self" (Reyes 110). While Aldrick does not choose to look at himself at this time, the simplistic directness of Sylvia's articulations, compounded by his interest in her, compel Aldrick to self-examination throughout the rest of *Dragon*. Despite his desire to remain distanced from her to preserve his dragon identity, by the

end of this conversation "she was all inside him," and he has unconsciously commenced his journey towards self-discovery (*Dragon* 48):

> Into his [Carnival] mask, Aldrick weaves his entire life, heritage and culture to create the beauty and threat and terror that was the message he took each year to Port of Spain. It was in this message that he asserted before the world his self. It was through it that he demanded that it *see* him, recognize his personhood, be warned of his dangerousness. (*Dragon* 50)

Aldrick, in fact, does "assert before the world [*a*] self," or *a* "personhood," through his dragon mask, but not a true self. Harold Barratt contends that Aldrick, through his mask and dragon identity, "seeks to reaffirm rebellion which he believes is a statement of his identity," and thus each year he carries the impotent message of warriorhood and rebellion to Port of Spain to assert the fierce and dangerous persona of King Dragon (*Metaphor* 405). Lovelace continues to drive home the point that persona, when used for purposes of self-definition, suffocates authentic identity.

While working on the costume, consequently with mind in motion, Aldrick contemplates and compares the threat of Sylvia and his caring for her to the stability of his dragon identity. Several times Sylvia had suggested that, if he chose to buy her costume for her, he might have her, but

> it was not just the matter of buying her a costume either—not that he had the money even for that—but to make even that offer now

> was to begin to contradict the very guts and fibre of his own living: Aldrick was a dragon. He was a hustler, working nowhere; and the only responsibility he was prepared to bear now was to his dragon, that presentation on Carnival day of the self that he had lived the whole year. He had his life. (*Dragon* 58)

Responsibility represents the foundation of both individual and communal identity, and Lovelace continually returns to the idea that persona, in this case King Dragon, cannot "bear" responsibility for anyone or anything besides itself, and, therefore, cannot contribute to true community. Aldrick knows that to even make an offer to Sylvia to buy her costume would "contradict" his entire dragon "essence" which requires aloofness, detachment and apathy. Furthermore, Aldrick, at this point in the novel, believes he needs nothing besides his dragon mask and identity for "he had his life," and, consequently, he will not allow his interest in Sylvia to mature for "she had the power to draw him into that world of ordinary living and caring that he had avoided all his life" (*Dragon* 58). As Williams states, Aldrick's mask "allows [him] to postpone the real business of living; the questions of responsibility and commitment that Sylvia pose for Aldrick can be avoided as long as he can find in the stylized costume a statement of personhood" (144). To love Sylvia would force Aldrick to confront questions about his core-identity, a journey he resists at this point in the novel.

The threat that is Sylvia, however, directly affects Aldrick's actions and also "have [him] thinking" (*Dragon* 115). During the night following his

conversation with Sylvia, as it gets late, Aldrick asks Basil, the boy who has been helping and observing him create his dragon mask for the past two years, why he hasn't left for home yet. The boy responds that he is leaving home because his step-father beats him. Suddenly he "realize[s] that after two Carnivals, two years of the boy coming to his place and working with him, all he knew of him was his first name" (*Dragon* 60). Sylvia has affected him and his thinking, and, now for the first time, he finds himself contemplating responsibilities and societal obligations that previously had absolutely no bearing on his self-contained world. The boy asks Aldrick to walk him home and speak with his step-father, Fisheye, about the beatings. Aldrick refuses at first, and the dragon in him tells the boy "this ain't my business," but then something prompts him to fulfill the boy's request (*Dragon* 60). What Aldrick interprets as softness in himself represents his first true effort at accepting responsibility as a member of a community. As he walks home from his futile confrontation with Fisheye, however, he tells himself "he had no right to get involved in the first place," and reminds himself "'You's a dragon man... A dragon can't t'ink 'bout these things" (*Dragon* 88). Aldrick's struggle as both dragon and self continues.

As time marches forward, Aldrick continues to find "his mind on other things" than his dragon costume, such as "the boy Basil, whom he had not seen since the night he took him home; [or] Sylvia, that child, woman, promise, challenge, whom he found himself daily watching, flitting about the Yard" (*Dragon* 114). Sylvia disrupts Aldrick's isolation, and he begins "to feel the need

to understand himself, to find out what things meant and why he was doing the things he was doing" (*Dragon* 114). Aldrick struggles with the liberating power of introspection, and he begins to question what really defines him, and whether or not "he can continue to function only as the warrior—the Dragon of threat and rebellion leaving out the other business of living; woman, children" (Jaggi 26).

Philo, prior to leaving the yard as up-and-coming calypsonian, addresses the change that Sylvia has initiated in Aldrick and warns him that "this little stupid girl" is destroying "the best dragon in the whole fucking world" (*Dragon* 115). Lovelace, through Philo, invokes the fear of breaking tradition, a fear Kumaca ignored, but this tradition centers on living behind a mask of detachment. People recognize Aldrick's progressive transformation and worry about the consequences to Calvary Hill. Accordingly, Philo decides he needs to "watch [Aldrick] much more carefully, as if he had discovered in him potential for treason to a way of life they had shared so long, lived so long (*Dragon* 116). Ironically, Philo has not yet begun his reconstruction of himself, so Aldrick's introspection is threatening to the people's indifferent detachment from change on the Hill.

In fact, the Hill feels that Aldrick commits treason to their way of life when he will not act rashly and confront Pariag, the Indian on the Hill, about his gall of buying a new bicycle and bringing it into the Yard. The Hill cannot understand Aldrick's decision not to act as a product of his new manner of thinking, of questioning. Aldrick himself realizes that "earlier it would have

thrilled him to provide in violence an answer to Pariag's audacity, but now he felt that he did not want to be hurried into anything. He was not sure any more about a lot of things" (*Dragon* 119). Aldrick begins to accept questioning, "why he was doing the things he was doing," as a part of the process of transformation, but, as he progresses, he finds himself "engaged in [an] uneasy fiction" in which the Yard's people expect him to act fiercely and rashly as the dragon he used to be. He struggles to reconcile the Hill's expectations and his own desires to contemplate and to act slowly. He tries to exhibit "sneering evil look[s] that announce: 'I am still Aldrick; I am still the Dragon on Calvary Hill'," or "smile and try to look tough," but the Hill perceives his change, and "he could feel the Yard, growing suspicious of him" (*Dragon* 119).

One evening, directly after an argument between Aldrick and his landlord, explicitly about the rent but implicitly about Aldrick not confronting Pariag as part of his dragon responsibility, Philo stops by Aldrick's place to visit. In a climactic moment, Aldrick, infuriated, confused and contemplative, assails Philo with his concerns and forces him to understand his meditations concerning his self-imprisoning existence and his increasingly reluctant role as dragon. He tells Philo,

> I don't own one thing in this fucking place, except that dragon there, and the dragon ain't even mine... They killing people in this place, Philo. Little girls, they have them whoring. And I is a dragon. And what is a man? What is you or me, Philo? And I

> here playing a dragon, playing a masquerade every year, and I forget what I playing it for... Is like nobody remember what life is, and who we fighting and what we fighting for. I want to catch a breath, I want to see what I doing, to try to remember what life is and who is I and what I doing on this fucking Hill. (*Dragon* 124)

Aldrick's false identity distracts him from the important struggle to establish true identity in the context of years of submission, slavery and colonization, but, as Barratt maintains, "to find this deeply buried self Aldrick [will need to] set himself free from the prison of the dragon, thereby exposing the self which has remained disguised behind the Carnival mask" (411). Aldrick has yet to shed his mask, but he has begun to ask those powerfully destructive questions that disassemble masks and search for the "self beneath the tinsel" (Barratt, *Metaphor* 412).

Aldrick feels Carnival Monday morning in his blood, as he puts on his dragon costume, "a memory that had endured the three hundred odd years to Calvary Hill, a sense of entering a sacred mask that invested him with an ancestral authority to uphold before the people of this Hill" (*Dragon* 134). Aldrick, however, cannot escape the dragon's role to maintain Carnival's foundational principles of warriorhood and rebellion. He understands that "the dragon alone was left to carry the message," and that the message might be lost "among the fancy robbers and the fantasy presentations that were steadily entering Carnival; drowned amidst the satin and silks and the beads and feathers

and rhinestones. But bothering him even more than this was the thought that maybe he didn't believe in the dragon any more" (*Dragon* 135). Aldrick questions the "ancestral authority" of the "sacred mask" to transform, to liberate and to renew as it had once been intended to do. His emerging core-self, itself the result of cultural hybridity in waves of historical colonization, compels him to examine and to analyze the supposed, inherent liberation of the mask.

The ambience of Carnival overpowers him as soon as he steps outside, however, and the excitement of his mask derails his progress down the road to self-discovery. He feels "again the fierce love and hope that he had doubted in himself, [feels] again a sense of mission; [feels] that yes, there was a place here for him, that there was something to say yes to, and people before whom and on whose behalf he could dance the dragon" (*Dragon* 137). Although Aldrick seems temporarily to abandon his pursuit of authentic identity, or to question the historical elements of hybridity that comprise it, he begins to identify the contribution of his role as dragon to his community.

Interestingly, his questioning of self affords him the ability to penetrate the personae of others. With Carnival in full swing, Aldrick observes carefully "Sylvia dancing with all her dizzying aliveness, dancing wildly; frantically twisting her body, flinging it around her waist, jumping and moving, refusing to let go of that visibility, that *self* the Carnival gave her" (*Dragon* 141, *emphasis added*). For Aldrick, Sylvia's frantic Carnival exuberance betrays itself, and he finds in her "leaping" an attempt "to leap out of herself into her self, a self in

which she could stay for ever, in which she could *be* for ever" (*Dragon* 141). Lovelace points to the opportunity provided by Carnival for the dance of self-possession, but it should be a dance of rejuvenation, not escape.

Aldrick annually assumes the mask of King Dragon partly because of inheritance, but also as a "way to disconnect himself from things which he couldn't escape and which threatened to define him in a way in which he didn't want to be defined" (*Dragon* 145). But because of this very disconnection, Aldrick

> realiz[es] that he had never really lived on this Hill, never embraced this place as home, never felt it to himself, to his bones. He had been living in the world of the dragon, avoiding and denying the full touch of the Hill. He had been cheating himself of the pain, of the love, of his living. (*Dragon* 145)

He had never possessed his land and his people, instead allowing his single possession, the static mask of the dragon, to possess him. In departing the illusory world of the persona, and "looking back now he felt that he had been living a dream from which he had recently awakened and found that he alone was real, that the others were still in that dream " (*Dragon* 150-1). As he continues to move forward in the process of self-discovery, he "fe[els] a great distance from himself, as if he had been living elsewhere from himself, and he thought that he would like to try to come home to himself"—the central process of establishing authentic, hybrid identity (*Dragon* 146). As the title to the chapter

"Ash Wednesday" alludes to, Aldrick has begun to resurrect his authentic identity that was sacrificed to the mask of the King Dragon.

As a result of all the "thinking and plotting" that Miss Olive interprets as "going crazy," Aldrick realizes "that the year was ending and he hadn't even thought about what dragon he would play in the coming Carnival. He had tried to think of it, but his mind just wouldn't focus on Carnival" (*Dragon* 163 & 164). His desire to question and to analyze has occupied the majority of his time and led him to the realization that "he really didn't want to play dragon" (*Dragon* 164). With the progressive emergence of an authentic identity and the realization that "the rite of Carnival cannot bring salvation, nor self-fulfillment," Aldrick finds less need for the hollow persona of the dragon (Barratt, *Metaphor* 411). But, he asks himself, "What was he without the dragon? Who was he? What was there to define himself? What would he be able to point to and say: This is Aldrick? What?" (*Dragon* 164). Without the identity of the dragon, Aldrick encounters the same fear of nothingness that led the village of Kumaca in *The Schoolmaster* to champion blindly colonial education. In an attempt to fill the newly created void of identity, Aldrick quickly finds a new mask with an established identity by hanging out with the "Outcasts" on the corner, of which Fisheye is one, and "who hushed to their bosoms an anger older than themselves" (*Dragon* 165).

The "outcasts" offer Aldrick a ready-made identity, with characteristics similar to the dragon identity, of misdirected violence, of inherited rebellion, of

intimidation and of indifference. The Corner and its outcasts represent a "steadfast pose of rebellion, in their rejection of the ordinary world, its rewards and promises, [and] the monotonous pedestrian journeying of people ensnared in their daily surviving" (*Dragon* 172 & 166). While the "outcasts" seem to desire social change, their "pose" of resistance affects no more change than the idle threat of the dragon dance, and the "remains of [this] defeated [corner] army, that refused to surrender, indeed, to acknowledge defeat, would keep on fighting, even after hope for victory had ended, out of not knowing what else to do" (*Dragon* 178).

This new mask of "stern face and few words" prevents Aldrick from explaining to the Corner guys the primary contradiction in Philo's identity after he achieves success with his calypsos (*Dragon* 173). Aldrick's "outcast" persona, like all masked identities, instinctively rejects natural contradictions, and Philo must therefore be either friend or foe, but he cannot be both,

> and it was less through his own conviction that Philo was a menace to the warriorhood at the Corner than his inability to hold the two ideas in his brain—Philo as friend, and Philo as threat; Philo as playboy, and Philo as brother from the Hill. (*Dragon* 173)

Although Aldrick chooses to see Philo as foe, he "would [later] recognize it as a more profound betrayal of himself that denied growth in himself, [and] denied the truth of his own feelings" (*Dragon* 173). In time, Aldrick discovers that "maybe it was easier to be rebel, to be warrior on the Corner," to live behind a

mask and not have to confront the complexities and contradictions of real life and emotion, "but, it wasn't the truth" (*Dragon* 173).

Another Carnival arrives and passes, and Aldrick chooses not to play dragon; in fact, "he felt kinda odd in the whole Carnival," not understanding his place in the event without his King Dragon mask. Right after Carnival that year the police launch a concerted campaign to rid the corners of hooligans. Suddenly, the "outcasts" acquire a tangible target for their misdirected violence, and inherit rebellion which the general populous "wanted to surrender" (*Dragon* 180).

Fisheye arrives at the Corner one day with a pistol, stages a fight between two of his corner warriors to attract police attention, and takes the two policemen and their jeep hostage when they finally stop. The Calvary Hill Nine, as they would later be referred to in court, and the hostage police officers steer for Woodford Square in the center of downtown Port of Spain and, upon arriving, drive the jeep in circles and identify themselves, over the megaphone in the jeep, as "The People's Liberation Army demanding Freedom, Liberation, and Justice" (*Dragon* 188). Persisting in the spirit of misdirected rebellion, they demand freedom, liberation and justice from the equally oppressed and confused citizens witnessing this futile revolt. The police allow them to leave Woodford Square that day after their barrage of ineffectual demands, and, when returning the following day, Aldrick discovers "a feeling of being imprisoned in a dragon costume on Carnival Tuesday" (*Dragon* 191). This spontaneous, uncoordinated

and, hence, futile attempt at revolution stifles core-identity as much as any other mask, for, as Aldrick later realizes in jail concerning their two days in the jeep with the hostage policemen, "their efforts at rebellion was just a dragon dance," just another masquerade, exhibited in their circular frenzy with the stolen jeep (*Dragon* 200).

During their trial the Calvary Hill Nine's lawyer strikes at the heart of their revolutionary attempt when he points out that the police did not stop them because "they trusted that the [Calvary Hill Nine] would be unable to make of their frustration anything better than a dragon dance, a threatening gesture" (*Dragon* 197). Indeed, the juvenile attempt at revolution represented one more dance, not of self-possession, but of self-repression. The lawyer accurately interprets their action not "as an attempt to seize power, but to affirm a personhood for themselves, and beyond themselves, to proclaim a personhood for people deprived and illegitimized as they," but the Outcasts' misdirected rebellion against unidentified oppressors unfortunately amounts to nothing more than another masquerade (*Dragon* 197).

In jail, Aldrick arrives at some of his most profound conclusions concerning the nature of self and their two days of impotent rage. He realizes that there were "so many things we coulda' do, and all we wanted was to attract attention! How come everything we do we have to be appealing to somebody else?" (*Dragon* 202). Lovelace points to the fact that personas constantly seek affirmation from others and, therefore, cannot make independent productive

changes. Aldrick's insight, "Is like we ain't have no self," strikes at the heart of hollow and false security provided by the persona and its inability to grasp life's inherent contradictions or embrace the responsibility of truly living in the real world (*Dragon* 202). In a moment of clarity, Aldrick proclaims, "We is people with the responsibility for we own self. And as long as we appeal to others, to the authorities, they will do what they want. We have to act for we" (*Dragon* 203). Indeed, the people of Calvary Hill need to attempt to "provide a force" from within "capable of taking over and addressing the issue they had raised," but the only way to achieve the confidence and self-assurance to affect change hinges on liberating and asserting authentic identity (Jaggi 26). Aldrick has redefined and found new motive for his quest towards self-discovery.

Following his release from prison, Aldrick heads directly for Calvary Hill, and more specifically Sylvia. He approaches her and wants to share his new understanding of real life and returning home to one's self, but she ignores his painful truths and proceeds to report the news of the Hill without recognition of Aldrick's realizations. Aldrick tells her

> You know, I didn't know nothing about life before... Life was only my dragon long ago. Now I know I ain't a dragon... Funny, eh? Years. And now I know I is more than just to play a masquerade once a year for two days, to live for two days. It have life for us to live, girl. Life. (*Dragon* 212)

Although he tries to share his understanding that life is much more than a masquerade, Sylvia ignores his realizations. In the past, Aldrick "had an emotionally crippling ambivalence towards her" as a product of false identity, but "this final meeting with Sylvia is a sign of Aldrick's growing maturity," exhibited by his desire "to share his new appreciation for life and understanding of love with [her]" (Barratt, *Metaphor* 412). For the moment, she will accept none of his gifts, as she has surrounded herself with and functions as one of the many modern conveniences in her existence with Guy; "she was too wise now for love" (*Dragon* 213). But Aldrick knows that "all this polish and glitter is not you. You is a queen, girl; and this room, pretty as it is, is not you... You don't want nobody to take care of you, to hide you, to imprison you. You want to be a self that is free; to be yourself, girl" (*Dragon* 216). He offers his wisdom, for "he had come to Sylvia, not to claim her, but to help her claim herself" (*Dragon* 217). He wishes to share and to foster his gift of self-discovery in others, and he starts with the person who both forced and inspired him to examine his own mask. Aldrick, however, understands that "one is saved only by one's self" and therefore leaves her with time to consider the proposition (*Dragon* 218). Although she does not accept the offer immediately, by the end of the novel, Cleothilda knows that "that girl gone to look for Aldrick," on her journey towards self-discovery (*Dragon* 254).

Aldrick struggles throughout *Dragon* to liberate his core-identity and to define authentic identity. Several times he regresses into comfortable,

established personas, most notably that of corner warrior, but, with seven years of uninterrupted contemplation, powerful, liberating emotion for Sylvia, and a desire to find a self that lives more than "once a year for two days," Aldrick triumphantly achieves near complete realization of his core-identity by the end of the novel. His perceptions along the way, however, of the masks' power to mute authentic identity, the detachment from real life and the missed opportunities to experience real emotion caused by masks, and, finally, the need to accept the responsibility for one's self and actions as an individual and as a member of a community constitute the most sweeping changes in Aldrick's character. He recognizes the destructiveness and stagnation of masks to one's life, and, in the lone but representative instance of Sylvia, he seems to want to share his new understandings with his community. Aldrick's journey to authentic identity and his new appreciation for "the pain, [and] the love, of his living" will spur him to motivate others towards self-discovery; in fact, his rebirth symbolizes the dawn of a cultural metamorphosis: "Aldrick represents the potential within the Trinidadian poor for a collective heroism," or, as his last name indicates, the "prospect" for a future of progress and advancement (Brydon 322). The dragon can and will dance, but this time it will be a dance of self-possession.

Throughout *Dragon*, Lovelace exposes the dangerously solipsistic world of the masked identity which defies responsibility for self and community. In *Dragon* Lovelace argues that a nation immersed in colonial legacies of human

exploitation and prejudice cannot look to others, but rather must question and examine the very nature of identity and relationships to stimulate change because blind acceptance and masking as exhibited in the actions of Cleothilda , Paulaine Dandrade, and Consantine Patron destroy any hope for community advancement and definition. Furthermore, the pages of *Dragon* reveal that the historical legacy of Carnival masking that once provided an outlet for expression and which clearly defined a people engaged in rebellion and in defiance has been corrupted. While Lovelace recognizes and celebrates the potential of Carnival masking for creation and expression, he clearly condemns a tradition of masking that provides an escape from the responsibility for cultural progress. Aldrick realizes in the course of the novel that not only has his community forgotten the purpose of its struggle, but also that masked identities are locked into a perpetual circularity as demonstrated by the ineffective revolt in the hijacked police jeep. Change and improvement begin with questioning, introspection and self-possession.

In the process of constructing an authentic identity for the diverse population of the Caribbean, however, Lovelace must deconstruct an ideology that "works to preserve an inequitable status quo" (Brydon 320). The Carnival mantra "'all o' we is one' just doesn't seem to work" because it disregards and refuses to admit the wide range of human experience and history that defines the Caribbean (Jaggi 27). To establish true community with a creolized culture, Lovelace begins to evaluate, to expose and to attack the inadequacy of

fundamental ideologies. These very ideologies, however, are reinforced by the politics and government of the nation. While the process of establishing authentic identity begins with questioning, moves to self-possession, and continues to acceptance of personal and social responsibility which both Philo and Aldrick seem to understand near the conclusion of *Dragon*, Lovelace recognizes that the government must bear responsibility for its complicity in fostering masked identity and supporting ideologies that secure the creole, hybridized peoples of the Caribbean in second-class status. In *Salt*, Lovelace's vision for the future of the Caribbean calls into question a government that prevents cultural advancement because a truly liberated people threaten both the status quo and the very privileged position of the politicians. Lovelace establishes the need for self-possession in his emerging vision of authentic, hybrid identity, but the government must also recognize, understand and revise its role in misleading and frustrating the efforts of the people of the Caribbean.

Reclamation and Reparation

In *Salt* (1996), Lovelace's developing vision of an authentic, creole identity integrates an examination of the institutions and politics that continue to "secure Blackpeople in their secondclassness" and the related mask of victimhood "that is strangling all of [them]" which the government, from his point of view, perpetuates because "confusion keep them in power... and every one of them fraid of people who are [truly] free" (*Salt* 188, 192, 190). In addition, Lovelace expresses the need to recognize, reclaim and liberate loss from years of cultural and personal repression before marching forward because one of the real "traged[ies] is to have lost the ability to feel loss" (*Salt* 259). The central struggle, however, resides in the challenge of "how to set people at liberty" when the people do not really want the responsibility of genuine emancipation and the power-wielding institutions such as schools and the government function to preserve a state of imprisonment (*Salt* 7). As a result of colonial history, the characters of *Salt* feel like foreigners in their own island and want both someone to make them welcome and someone to make reparations, but only Bango Durity, the narrator's misunderstood uncle, exhibits individual responsibility in the process of homecoming and reclamation. Self-possession, however, remains another matter, for even Bango sacrifices himself and nearly destroys his relationship with his wife in his fight for independence and reparation.

Alford George, one of the story's protagonists, grows up in a house surrounded by older brothers who cultivate "aimless ease," "blind support" and "indifference," by a father whose "stubbornness and spite and pride" fuel a "male and vainglorious martyrdom" and by a mother who sacrificed herself in marriage to "redeem womankind" (*Salt* 10, 13, 14). All of them are "tenants in the very house in which they live" (*Salt* 9). Dixon, Alford's father, works a land not his own, refusing promotion or any compensation beyond his wages as "his way to feel himself the equal of if not the superior to anybody," for "this giv[ing] more and more of himself ma[de] him more martyred and heroic" (*Salt* 19). Lovelace, however, depicts another harm of the solipsistic mask when "instead of getting [his wife] to a good doctor," Dixon finds a need to express his independence and uncompromising spirit by stocking up on bricks that will not only gather moss over the years, but also which he feels publicly declare his intention to buy the land and build his own house. As Alford realizes later in life, his father "was always a man bigger than he really could afford to be," not for the purposes of "deception" but as a way to "play out the wish of what he felt he ought to be" (*Salt* 40). Thus, Alford matures in a house of masks and sacrifice, and his mother's warning to him "to not let the same thing happen to him" seems to escape him until much later in his life.

As a schoolboy, Alford's "air of Sirness, his stiff, grave, wooden intensity, as much as his greater size... set him apart from his fellows and kept him an outsider for most of his school days" (*Salt* 29). Ostracized by his age and size,

Alford finds himself excluded from games of cricket with his classmates and, to compound the problem, from among boys his own age, "his reserve and lack of confidence in his talents handicapped him from the beginning" (*Salt* 30). In time, however, he finds "a taste" for "the exercise of power" when his classmates nominate him, most likely out of guilt for excluding him, for the position of umpire. He meticulously memorizes the rules and applies them with unwavering authority, penalizing even the most "minor infringements... not as an upholder of the law but as angel of vengeance victoriously punishing sin" (*Salt* 32). His schoolmaster recognizes an uncommon "sense of force" in Alford and at "sixteen invite[s] him to become a Pupil Teacher" (*Salt* 32). And, so, Alford finds an avenue to self-improvement that he believes will in time permit him entrance into "*the world*, more than a place, a mission, a Sacred Order that brought him into meaning, into Life" (*Salt* 27). As Philo discovered, however, when he moved from calypsos of social commentary to innocuous money makers, Alford's new position encourages "role seriousness," not real seriousness. Alford willingly surrenders and represses all previous meanings of self to assume his new persona.

Alford's transformation characterizes a preparation not only for the classroom, but also for his future encounter, as a true scholar, with "*the world*." As if he learned from his father the need to express intentions through outward and public declarations, Alford, too, makes visible changes that declare his goal of escape. He begins by "improv[ing] his vocabulary, get[ting] the correct

pronunciations of words, [finding the] ab[ility] to talk of novels, the theatre, opera, know[ing] what wines to choose when he went to restaurants in England" (*Salt* 33). Beyond these skills, however, he works to refine his demeanor and oral presentation and, consequently, begins "to speak more and more slowly to make sure that his verbs agreed with his subjects" (*Salt* 33). In an effort to eradicate all things Caribbean about himself, he "cull[s] out words of unsure origin and replace[s] them with ones more familiarly English," especially "Caribbean words like *jook, mamaguy* and *obzocky*" (*Salt* 33). As he "surrender[s] his vocabulary... he fe[els] his meanings slipping away," his authentic, creole identity contained in his language, but "he had to surrender meanings; he couldn't take his words out into the world" (*Salt* 33). Imitation, which Philo discovers as mandatory to his persona's existence, translates directly to Alford's decision to "put his radio on the BBC for the correct pronunciation of words" (*Salt* 33). Finally, to complete his mask, he assumes "a new walk—gait would be the word—slower, more leisurely steps that gave him more time in which to work out his translations from his thinking into what he saw now as proper English" (*Salt* 34).

> With his mask in place, he began to feel himself bound for *the world* and to look at his stay in Cunaripo as temporary, as a state from which he would graduate in the same effortless way in which one grew old, as a stop, a halt, a station to refine and purify himself and straighten out his defects, ever that it was never to be his final home. (*Salt* 34)

Lovelace means to reiterate here the crucial point that masks prevent the possibility of possessing home and community, and, so, Alford resists his land and fosters an intentional detachment lest "he should give the impression that he had accepted this island as his home" (*Salt* 34). When he leaves for Teachers' Training College, he does so "with a sense of relief, of escape, glad to be away from this settlement and compromise" (*Salt* 35).

Upon his return, Alford finds an interest in Vera who blossomed into "a woman" while he was away. It is Vera who makes him understand that he represents the promise of escape from Cunaripo, and, she, therefore, "never tired of talking of his leaving, of the world that he was going into" (*Salt* 39). Alford's mask of separation and proclaimed intentions of leaving the island offer Vera an imagined and vicarious escape, but, when Alford makes his first self-sacrifice in deciding to use the family money to buy the land that his father and mother live on instead of traveling to England, Vera's interest wanes. Not yet knowing that he has decided to stay, she comes to his apartment one afternoon "to yield up herself properly, with taste and unambiguity, the way she would give a present that she wanted treasured, as an act that required no help from him" (*Salt* 41). She slips into his apartment, which he always leaves unlocked for her, and begins to undress while he is in the shower. When he finally emerges, he sits on his bed and watches this show of giving, but, when he reaches out to her and disturbs the mood of surrender, she hesitates. She stops and realizes that her final garment "was the last barrier to her pride and self," and, "as if she had

awakened in her the value of herself as a person... she asked 'You love me, Alford?'" (*Salt* 42). But she stifles his answer, recalling that this act was not for love, but an effort to "bind herself to him, so that she herself would be taken out into the world when he went there" (*Salt* 42). When he makes his announcement that he plans to stay, she suddenly "feel[s] so unclean" and loses all impetus to make a gift of herself. After she dresses hastily and leaves, he "knew that he had betrayed her," and, consequently, all who had interpreted his escape as the possibility for the same within themselves. This experience "jolt[s] him back to the island," and Alford stumbles into another phase along the path of self-delusion.

With the decision to stay on the island, Alford recognizes that "in the last few years everything [he] had done was devoted to preparing himself for his mission to the world" (*Salt* 54). He had accomplished a "performed refinement... [and now] he began to feel the absurdity that he had become" (*Salt* 54). Alford, however, continues to resist the island and its people, forming a misdirected rebellion against the compromise and resignation of the island, embodied in his "mother's surrendering faith, the quiet submissiveness of his brothers, the accommodation of his father and the threat of settling into this little world outside the world" (*Salt* 55). He has not relinquished his ideas about the promise of "*the world*," so he "trie[s] to feel himself bigger than the place" and vehemently refuses "to be accommodated, to belong to their little world" (*Salt* 54 & 55). In time, Mr. Penco, the headmaster, offers Alford a position to teach the College

Exhibition class which he accepts "as a project for the focus of his energies, his force, his anger, as a challenge that would give more meaning to his waiting and allow him to help at least a few children escape the humbling terror of the island" (*Salt* 55). He runs his classroom like a dictator, placing unreasonable expectations on the children, including a "typed sheet with details of the proper diet" which he demands that the parents unquestioningly support and that the children follow rigorously. By keeping his education concerning the island to a minimum, he perpetuates a self-loathing through continual contrast of "the world of the island" with "the bigness of another world," and fills the children "with the idea of escape" (*Salt* 62). Alford's actions express almost didactically Lovelace's condemnation of the persona's corrosive existence on community and self-possession.

Lovelace elaborates Alford's efforts at self-rejection when a young boy, Peter, shows up to Alford's class who resembles a younger Alford so much that he "felt that he had been transported back in time and was looking into his own face" (*Salt* 66). The boy, standing in his school uniform which hugs tightly his "growing frame," offers Alford an image "of the kind of clown that as a schoolboy he must have presented to the world," and as a mirror of his earlier efforts at self-repression, "Alford want[s] to turn him away immediately" (*Salt* 66). Miss Ollivera, the woman who brings this boy to his classroom, the means to his self-reflection, sparks a realization in Alford after they start spending time together. In a discussion about her scheduled departure from the island, she

asks him why he continues to stay despite his apparent distaste for his home. In a moment that betrays his mask of isolation and indifferent detachment, the words "I am part of this now... slip" from his mouth and for "the first time he admit[s] to himself" his participation in shaping the future of "the island" (*Salt* 69). Realization inevitably precedes change.

When Alford returns to his classroom for the new term, he does so with a sense of purposelessness after not having been able to answer Miss Ollivera's question "What are we saved for?" (*Salt* 70). One morning following recess, Alford starts dictating words, as if to purge the uselessness of his own colonial education, and continues right through lunch and the end of the school day. Long after all the other children drop their pencils, Peter, the boy who reflects a much younger Alford, struggles arduously to keep up. When the schoolmaster finally breaks Alford's trance to let the children go for the day, Peter approaches Alford's desk to submit his stack of copybooks for correction, an action that at first puzzles Alford. He asks the boy to sit, and, as he examines him, Alford understands that he had always kept a distance from the boy because

> he had reminded him of himself, his hesitancy, his awkwardness, his plodding, his futile efforts to establish himself among his fellows. It was a self that he was never proud of, that he had always been trying to escape or forget, and seeing it in the boy, he had kept the boy at arm's length. (*Salt* 75)

But this inescapable reflection of his true self penetrates his mask of repression, and, at the height of his developing epiphany, Alford realizes and accepts his complicity not only in "le[ading] the children astray," but also in deluding himself. For

> nineteen years... he had contributed to a system that gave all its rewards, put all its prestige towards training a few students for escape. To fail to escape was defeat; defeat even before you began. And that was why you could accept the secondclassness of the place. Secondclassness was the punishment for the defeated, the failure. (*Salt* 76)

In the very structure that should provide opportunity for enlightenment and self-improvement, Alford discovers a legacy of colonial subjection and imprisonment which "undermine[s] his country and the interests of its children" (Sybil 78). This transforming insight clarifies for Alford that "if he was to go on, he would have to begin afresh to prepare children for living in the island" (*Salt* 76). To prepare the children for a world besides their own, as Alford did for so long, promotes acceptance of inferiority in the people and a feeling of "secondclassness" about the island. The boy, Peter, even "sense[s] his conversion," and Alford, no longer fearing the attachment of genuine compassion for his students, reaches into his pocket and gives Peter money to replace the copy books that he has filled with Alford's ravings.

Alford's "resurrect[ion]" fills him with a new sense of mission, and, immediately, he begins a crusade to abolish the College Exhibition exam which "was wreaking terrible damage on the nation's children under the guise of education" and to "reorient the entire teaching programme to give every child that came to school an education" (*Salt* 77). The schoolmaster stands firmly by the conventional policy, declaring that "he couldn't prevent his staff from thinking... [and] couldn't prevent fresh ideas emerging, but his job was to ensure that the policy was upheld" (*Salt* 77). Because Mr. Penco will not entertain his proposal, Alford takes his case to the government officials in Port-of-Spain. After being ignored and kicked around from office to office, he decides to fast until someone with the power to make changes will hear him, but he "start[s] this fast the same way he had started everything else, alone and uncertain" (*Salt* 79). Alford wants, nobly, to make sweeping educational changes, but he has no understanding of how or where to begin.

What Alford finds during his fast intrigues him, for representatives from all different causes and even those "who had no special feeling for his cause... come to give support to him based just on the fact that he was protesting" (*Salt* 81). He encounters the problem of equality through victimhood that Lovelace explores more fully in later chapters. "Instead of looking at the world from the position of liberation" following emancipation and much later independence, people "join[ed] up according to [a] sense of oppression" (*Salt* 193). Victimization served the purposes of unification, definition and equality:

"everybody is a victim and that is what make everybody equal. That is the equality we have here: the equality of victims" (*Salt* 190). This understanding figures greatly in Alford's final metamorphosis.

During his fast, Alford receives several invitations to join political parties as the "nation was certain that the qualities which he had displayed so admirably in the cause of education would serve him well in the important role they believed he was destined to play in the greater affairs of the nation" (*Salt* 87). He neither accepts nor rejects any of these offers, wanting more time to consider the best plan of attack for social reform. After thirty-two days of fasting, "it was impossible for the politicians to further ignore him," so the government officials "move a motion to have the College Exhibition examination debated in the Parliament" (*Salt* 86). Although Alford never sees any changes as a result of his fast "because the government had already set up a One-Man Commission of Enquiry into all aspects of the College Exhibition Examination and were then awaiting his findings," his awakening to the people's equality in victimhood that passively awaits restitution and change energizes his mission "to root [the children] in their world" (*Salt* 86 & 88).

He returns to his classroom with lessons that focus on and highlight the island's culture in an attempt "to make the island a place where people didn't have to leave to find the world," to make their world not second class but of immediate importance (*Salt* 90). As Amanda Hopkinson states, Alford George "tries to make his homeland... a place that can realize its own destiny" (60).

Although he will not understand the parallel to Bango's efforts at reclamation and welcoming until much later, Alford works to organize a "band for Carnival [that] would depict the beauty and the promise of the people of the island" in which all ethnic and indigenous cultures would receive representation (*Salt* 90). Furthermore, "in order for people to understand one another he wants them to take the role of the other" (*Salt* 90). Alford's campaign for tolerance and national unification inevitably receives criticism when "Pastor Peter Prue of the Tabernacle of Righteousness and Light... condemn[s] Carnival as devil worship," exploiting the opportunity for publicity and recognition. In time, Prue receives strong rebuke from a Dr. Kennos who finds "Carnival, its indigenous character, its embracing fellowship, its sense of celebration of art, of life, of creativity, worthy to be given the kind of appreciation reserved for religion" (*Salt* 92). Alford's band of unification and welcoming, however, "had to be abandoned," but the division and opportunistic exploitation further open Alford's eyes to the fact that "people were wounded. Goodwill was not enough to heal the nation" (*Salt* 93). Indeed, Lovelace exposes the fear and dispossession that the strangling masks of victimhood induce, and the entire ordeal galvanizes Alford's belief in the need for political intervention. He starts down a road that will, in time, intersect with Bango's efforts as he searches "to find the one to make the welcome" (*Salt* 93).

As Alford works towards creating a political party, he encounters Florence who has spent the majority of weekends during the past thirteen years

waiting and watching for her prospective husband from her sister's veranda. Florence, too, has struggled with the search for authentic, hybrid identity, trying to find and to release "the idea of herself that she wasn't fulfilling" (*Salt* 97). When Alford passes the house one afternoon, she feels that all her patient waiting has concluded. Not really knowing how to approach Alford, she shows up at his house several days later under the pretense of wanting to contract him for private lessons. He explains that he does not offer private lessons from his home, but he inquires as to what lesson she wants. In a moment of honest vulnerability, she says "I want to learn how to be me, how to be myself. I don't know a damn thing. Like I miss something, or something miss me" (*Salt* 101). As her "tears flow silently down her cheek," Alford accepts this gift of genuine emotion and offers to "see what I can do" (*Salt* 101). The ensuing relationship brings Florence not only into Alford's life, but also into the developing political party as well when she is appointed to take minutes. As this party labors towards nominating an individual to make the necessary welcome to the many different cultures that inhabit the island, Florence proves to be instrumental when she suggests Bango Durity. For various different social and historical reasons, none of the actual party constituents feels qualified to make the welcome, but, when Florence names Bango, Alford "recall[s] seeing him at the very first Independence Day parade marching with fussy grandeur at the head of his troop of little soldiers going down main street" (*Salt* 103). Upon first glimpse of this motley group, Alford feels "tempted to laugh, but when he learnt that that

man on his own authority had outfitted the boys and at his own expense had put four of them in costumes to represent the different ethnic groups of the nation, he had felt humbled, embarrassed, elated" (*Salt* 103). Indeed, Bango seems to "truly mak[e] a statement of welcome to them all," a statement he supports individually even after "the government centralized the parade in the city of Port-of-Spain to cut down on expenses" (*Salt* 103).

When the party breaks for the day after deciding to nominate Bango as the one to make the official welcome, Florence raises the question of appropriate compensation for Bango, the one this would-be political party intends to ask to bear the colossal responsibility of welcoming all to the island. Although Alford cannot find any immediate "way to welcome the one who we want to welcome everybody," he digs up a historical document during the next week that describes Britain's land laws intended to prevent emancipated slaves from gaining "any Crown lands [without] a proprietary title to them: and to fix such a price upon all Crown lands as may place them out of reach of persons without capital" (*Salt* 105 & 106). Alford uncovers the guise of emancipation that not only feigned giving human independence, but also "deliberate[ly] prevent[ed] people working their way out of enslavement" (*Salt* 106). Alford suggests that a gift of land represents the necessary and appropriate gift for Bango the welcomer, but the other party members call his gift by its proper name—reparation—and begin to retreat from the treacherous ground surrounding the issue. But before Alford arrives at a decision as to how to proceed, a different

political party, the National Party, hoodwinks Alford into accepting a position, which disbands the developing party and derails Alford's immediate project.

Alford, of course, enters his new political position with the purest intentions "to serve the people" (*Salt* 119). He achieves unusually quick promotion when the Cascadu/Cunaripo representative dies and the Prime Minister's main man, Ethelbert B. Tannis, approaches Alford to run for the newly available position. Recalling the eye-opening experience of his fast, he develops a campaign slogan of "Seeing Ourselves Afresh," believing

> that because enslavement and indenture had brought our peoples to the islands, we had continued to see ourselves from the perspective of our loss, characterizing ourselves as ex-enslaved, ex-indentured... [but] we would better address our future if we saw ourselves as a new people brought together and created anew by our struggles against enslavement, indenture and colonialism.
>
> (*Salt* 122)

Lovelace thus identifies the preliminary step in genuine liberation as self-emancipation which recognizes and reclaims the centuries of tragic loss and inhumane treatment as a means to possess the past and to create the future. In time, Alford moves into the old Prime Minister's office which the PM abandoned when a window that he attempted to open did not yield to "the insistence of a will that had long practice in being obeyed" (*Salt* 114). The PM's office decorations, the portraits of the colonial governors, impress the fact that "this

was their history... *And where was ours*?" (*Salt* 125). Alford trumpets his mantra and pursues his vision "with unabating enthusiasm" that thrills the media. He argues "to make the steel band the central symbol of the nation, an icon encapsulating our struggle for freedom to express ourselves in our own idiom" (*Salt* 128). But it is not until he is confronted one morning following his daily jog that he understands "they making you an arse... All you do is end up talking and talking just like them" (*Salt* 129). Alford has fallen prey to the destructive idleness of the political mask. While he holds legitimate ideas about social transformation, Alford has spent his time behind the mask of fruitless political rhetoric, sloganeering and endless promises. His all-consuming concern to represent the people has led him away from making any of the changes that his vision incorporates. Furthermore, the National Party has allowed him to make his ineffectual speeches knowing that such commitment to the media and zeal for disseminating his beliefs will prevent him from making any real changes; he has functioned as one of the many tools that preserves the very state of second-class sensibility that plagues the nation. During one of his "post-coital musings," he explains to Florence that

> I have forgotten my vision. I have become part of the tapestry of pretense of power. I who ought to have been the one to disturb this numbing peace have now become keeper of that peace. I have joined the gang of overseers that help to keep this place a plantation. (*Salt* 130)

This political mask impairs progress towards authentic, creole identity and true hybrid community just as much as, if not more, than other types of masks as a result of its authority to mislead. Alford holds his "sense of irrelevance" closely to remind him of his true mission for reform, and, when he receives "the invitation... the ticket to his salvation... a request from Bango, real name Emmanuel Durity, to take the salute at the March Past as the Independence Day Parade in Cunaripo and to deliver the Feature Address on that occasion," he knows that his cause is neither lost nor betrayed, and that Bango's reparation must take the forefront of his efforts to reinvigorate his vision towards establishing national authentic identity, towards "Seeing Ourselves Afresh" (*Salt* 130 & 131).

Bango's wife Miss Myrtle, however, pleads with Alford to decline Bango's invitation in an effort to discourage Bango from "believ[ing] that he is the only man responsible for this community" and to save their relationship which has suffered from years of Bango's relentless giving (*Salt* 162). When Alford, however, offers to give them the land they live on as a sign of appreciation for Bango's unprecedented selflessness and his efforts at hospitality and integration, Myrtle cannot simply ignore what seemed "not only fair but deserved" (*Salt* 162). When she breaks the offer gently to Bango, he seems disappointed to even have to say, "'You miss the point Myrtle'" (*Salt* 163). Bango explains that he does not want anyone to feel sorry for him, but he never explicitly articulates "the point" that Myrtle has missed. Bango, through his misunderstood but "indigenous

values" (Ferguson 19) of "undefeat" and "the belief that we is more.. than beast" has resisted and fought the post-colonial second-class sensibility thrust upon the people of the Caribbean through the silent message, or the point, of his marches since the very first Independence Day (*Salt* 155 & 159). He has accepted the enormous responsibility of autonomy and has attempted to march the diverse people of the island to progress through integration and hospitality which his band of little marchers has always represented.

Myrtle, however, tells Bango that she thinks he has maintained this struggle out of "spite... to remain at this stage, having nothing. Because to have money, to have things will take you away from your struggle. It will make you too ordinary" (*Salt* 164). Indeed, Bango has sacrificed his very marriage in his fight for liberation and for proper reparation, and, suddenly, he realizes the parallel struggle that Myrtle has endured to accommodate his marches. He moves close to her, gently touches her wrinkled fingers which reveal the years of work to support Bango's marches. As if awakened to his unintentional matrimonial neglect, he offers her the only appropriate gift, recognition in the form of a sincere "Thank you" (*Salt* 165). They hold each other for a while, and Myrtle discovers "a new comfort and a strange and lovely triumphant peace because in one flash she could see that Bango had recognized her... he realize that in the journey he thought that he had made alone, I had been with him the whole way" (*Salt* 165). Myrtle had marched right beside Bango without recognition or appreciation, silently supporting him and his fight. Finally, Bango recognizes

the self that Myrtle had offered all along: her core-identity, her steadfast creole, hybrid identity. But before he continues to express his gratitude, she tells Bango that he must explain to Alford why the land must be given publicly. Alford's unclear and wandering agenda and Bango's missed point finally collide.

"Alford in the PM's Chair Listens to Bango" functions as a central chapter in *Salt*. Bango finds opportunity to articulate his point, and Alford seems to finally get the point of his mother's message about not becoming a sacrifice. This chapter also marks the end of Alford's political career, for his decision to sit in the PM's old chair while listening to Bango's story, "the real story," will give the party all the needed justification to oust him, "another story that belongs to the politics of rumour, scandal, idleness" (*Salt* 167). Bango begins his narrative by explaining that he knows he "should be thankful for [the] offer of land," but his statement implies a message that only his history can explain. Alford, however, "settle[s] back for the falsetto of false modesty, of self-pity and martyrdom that [he] had come to recognize as the voice of [his] father's generation struggling with its victimhood and its pride" (*Salt* 167). What Alford actually hears changes him permanently.

Bango explains that he "ain't come here to make the Whiteman the devil... [but] to call him to account, as a brother, to ask him to take responsibility for his humanness, just as I have to take responsibility for mine" (*Salt* 167). He admits with uncommon sincerity and insight that "this business of being human is tougher than being the devil, or being God for that matter. And it doesn't matter

whether in the role of brutalized or brutalizer" (*Salt* 167-8). Indeed, he acknowledges the complicated social mess that colonialism created, and, rather than pointing a finger, or placing blame, he wants each party involved to take responsibility for their actions, a charge that false identities resist. Bango also knows that

> there was never any magic about what they had to do. From time begin, people have always done each other wrong, not because one fella is so much more wicked than the next but because to be stupid is the principal part of what is to be human. And unless we want to doom ourselves to remain forever locked into the terrors of the error of our stupidity, we to repair the wrong by making *reparation*." (*Salt* 168-9, *emphasis added*)

Lovelace highlights the fact that righting wrongs represents the first logical step in surmounting the "terror" of colonialism.

Bango recalls the efforts of his grandfather Jojo who, when he heard of the impending emancipation, tried to prepare himself for the weighty responsibility of autonomy and worked to construct meaning for the world which he was about to enter. When Jojo's acquaintance Faustin discussed the possibility of returning to Africa, Jojo began a legacy of repressing loss, for "he had no idea of the loss he had lost. He had to try to put aside the depth of this loss he had lost and find a new way in his mind to claim this new world as home" (*Salt* 173). Africa was a distant and unfamiliar place, and Jojo's "homeland was the whole

continent. He was from Africa, not a place in Africa" (*Salt* 173). And, so, Bango explains, Jojo felt he had to claim this land which he had "endured... planted without reward... sown without reaping" (*Salt* 173). In time, Jojo knew that "he could claim it not as a place to go back to, not as a place where he would find his past, but a place in which he had to seek his future" (*Salt* 173). Jojo had to find a way to make sense of the chaos of colonialism that had made the island "an English colony ruled by Spanish law, run by French settlers" (*Salt* 174). And what kind of home and future, Jojo wondered, "could you have with planters who refuse the offer of a new constitution because they refuse to share power with the other so-called free people of the island" (*Salt* 174). Indeed, this island, this new home, Jojo knew, was "the battleground for a new world" (*Salt* 174).

After making mental preparations to assimilate the change and to embrace a land that had been the site of brutal exploitation, the governor made the announcement that "those who worked in the fields would be set free in six years and those who worked in the house would be freed in four" (*Salt* 176). He expected an "uprising," a "revolt," but instead "he was met with the same astonished and outraged faces of people who had learned to wait, of people who had learned to calculate" (*Salt* 176-7). The real message, though, that "Emancipation was not to free them... [but] doom them to a secondclassness in a country that they more than any other people had brought to prosperity" did not escape Jojo (*Salt* 177 & 179). He understood that this show of emancipation

> manoeuvre[d] them into accepting not freedom but the promise of being set at liberty, with no more attention given to their years of degradation and captivity and abuse than if they had been dogs that had been chained and were now going to be loosened to fend for themselves. (*Salt* 177)

Indeed, Bango's marches of "undefeat" which clearly expressed the "belief that we is more.. than beast" carried on his great-grandfather's legacy of resisting dehumanization. Jojo realized that night that "Blackpeople had to take responsibility for whatever new world was to be made," because those people who had created the world of colonialism had no intention of accepting responsibility or making reparations for the "terror of their errors" (*Salt* 178).

While several of Jojo's fellow workers on the estate decided to affect their own freedom by escaping and squatting a piece of land, Jojo "saw the trap" (*Salt* 180). The authorities could "allow one or two to go and squat land [to] ease the frustration of the more adventurous people and ma[k]e this scrambling for land appear to be the solution" (*Salt* 180). The problem, of course, was that "everybody had worked... everybody was entitled," and that to accept squatting as a resolution meant "to accept the status they had imposed upon them" (*Salt* 180). Indeed, squatting conveyed an acceptance of second-class citizenship, of not deserving the basic human right of compensation for their exploited work "in a country that they more than any other people had brought to prosperity" (*Salt* 179).

Jojo, realizing the limited options available, returned to the estate he had worked for years while others ran to squat land not only to prove his "undefeat," but also to ask Carabon, the estate owner, to support a request for "relief in the form of land" to the Secretary of State for Colonial Department. Jojo, neither willing to accept the mask of victimhood which waits passively for reparation nor the status of second-class citizenship that squatting would secure, personally assumes the responsibility of attempting to right wrongs through his formal grievance. As he points out to Carabon, "you have been granted compensation for the loss of our labour, now we want compensation for the mashing up of our lives" (*Salt* 182). Carabon, fully understanding the implications of this request, hesitates to endorse the claim, and the complications and confusion of colonialism expressed in Carabon's gaze of "something like guilt and something like shame and something like rage" penetrate Jojo who "knew that Carabon knew that now he had either to carry forward Jojo's claim or to destroy him" (*Salt* 183). Bango recalls that Carabon spent the next few weeks "tr[ying] his best to get Jojo to withdraw the letter," even offering to rent and then to sell Jojo the piece of land that he had been working on. But years of dispossession and disenfranchisement by the colonial infrastructure have, of course, denied Jojo the means to purchase his freedom in the form of land; and now "these people were forcing him into battle. They had brought enslavement to an end, but they had no new policy, no real new vision of how the plantations were to run and how people were to live in freedom" (*Salt* 183). Indeed, Jojo's discovery embodies the

central struggle both of the novel and for the Caribbean, "how to set people at liberty" (*Salt* 7). Not only did the gesture of "emancipation.. not keep its promise," but also it created new prisons of victimhood and second-class status that the colonial system had no intention of addressing or rectifying (Mujica 2).

Shortly after true emancipation, Jojo begins to notice a new-looking people, the Indians brought in to fill the labor void following emancipation, which his acquaintance Faustin mockingly says "is the answer to [his] claim for compensation" (*Salt* 185). Bango recalls that, one morning on the way to the estate, Jojo heard the sound of cutlasses "from the land nearby" (*Salt* 185). What Jojo discovers is the beginning of a post-emancipation continuum of dispossession that Bango relives in an encounter with a man named Moon. Jojo meets an Indian neighbor, Feroze, who owns the adjacent land as a provision of his contract of indentured servitude. While Jojo can hardly believe that Feroze was given a contract that included terms for land, Feroze cannot imagine working as long as Jojo has on this land without a contract, a meeting which represents the basis of misunderstanding and racial division between Indians and Africans in the Caribbean. Jojo rightfully believes that the "Colony's treatment of the Indians had given him an even greater claim to reparation," but, from that day forward, he began a legacy of "waiting" that Bango carries on three generations later (*Salt* 187).

Bango's narrative of his family history serves to illustrate a point for Alford about the proposed gift of land. While Alford has suspicions about the

origin of the story as Bango cannot really provide any "corroborating details," he understands, nonetheless, that by invoking Jojo, Bango emphasizes the fact that he "had lived again his great-grandfather's story" (*Salt* 187). The newly found solidarity and understanding shared by Miss Myrtle and Bango prompts Myrtle to conclude the story by explaining that any gift, after this many years of waiting and resistance of second-class status "have to [be] give[n] openly [so that] everybody... know... we not beggars, we not begging. We just require what is our due" (*Salt* 187). And, without any additional explanation, Alford feels the full import of the story, understanding that

> The Colonial government, Britain, the authorities, however we called them, had had opportunities to make restitution and apology that would restore value and dignity and respect to our community and people. The sadness was that the National Party had done no better. (*Salt* 188)

Despite the obvious openings to make such reparation, both the colonial and post-independence governments neglected to make the necessary amends. But, as Alford continues to think, he realizes that not only had compensation been denied, but also the government "had left the problem unattended by not even acknowledging the presence of a problem. We had secured Blackpeople in their secondclassness" (*Salt* 188). For one of the first times in the novel, Alford projects confidence about the direction of his mission, determining that "what was needed was a new petition that would go this time not to the Colonial

Office, not to the Queen, but to the Cabinet of the National Party government of this country of which I was a member" (*Salt* 187). Ironically, the very sureness of his direction, of "mak[ing] the unpardonable error of taking land reform seriously," forces him out of politics altogether, for the issue of reparation is not one the National Party is willing to tackle (Ferguson 19).

The problem, of course, as the character Ethelbert B. Tannis explains in the following chapter is that "things look easy but nothing is simple here. You say you want to remove the fears from people. But people have a vested interest in their fears. They have a vested interest in their victimhood" (*Salt* 189). Furthermore, working towards removing these fears and fostering true liberation is not a state the PM wants, "because when he free Blackpeople it would follow that everybody will be free. And how he will control people when they free? It frighten him. Freedom is a thing that frighten people" (*Salt* 190). And as far as restitution and compensation for the exploited and enslaved workers in the form of land distribution, "the PM know that if he go and play the arse with Whitepeople property that is the last election he will win" (*Salt* 191). The relentless need to wear the political mask wedged the PM into a precarious position of finding a way "to keep you victim and to free you" (*Salt* 193). Tannis knows that Alford George is not the first person to "stumble on the truth that to free yourself you have to free everybody," but he also knows that at the heart of politics is the matter of control which true liberation threatens. Both the PM and Tannis fear "a situation in which you have no control over people. And how you

going to carry out your work without that control" (*Salt* 193). Indeed, the political mask has led anyone with the authority to make changes directly away from the central issue of "how to set people at liberty" (*Salt* 193). Self-emancipation is the foundation for Lovelace's vision of authentic, creole identity and, hence, true and complete liberation of the self and the community.

The last chapter, "Independence Day," emphasizes the inextricable relationship between self-liberation and national independence. In the first few pages of the chapter, Florence reminisces about how she lost herself in the persona of Cleopatra the queen that she played for Carnival many years back. The role was one from which "she couldn't turn back," in which "she was more person, more somebody who was not quite somebody" and which, ultimately, isolated her from men and from herself (*Salt* 248). In time, however, Alford appeared as the answer to her waiting, but from the very beginning of their relationship "carelessness had set in" and "all the tenderness was from her" (*Salt* 248). Alford had sacrificed himself completely to politics despite his mother's warning early in his life. He became the center of attention "with his invincible smile and his country sense, making promises he couldn't keep, inveigled into positions that upon second thought he should have abandoned but out of his idea of principle felt himself forced to honour" (*Salt* 249). And, in the midst of all this attention, Alford finds solace from the natural human insecurity regarding acceptance which all the experiences of exclusion from his childhood had fed. He loses himself in the game of politics "want[ing] to be admitted... want[ing]

people to like him, [and] to acknowledge him at least" (*Salt* 240). Indeed, politics provides him a forum in which he can establish an identity that demands acceptance. And from the sidelines, Florence

> watched him, shy in the tumult of an importance that was new to him, performing before his secretaries, the press, the Party, trying without success to present plans of a quickly fading and frustrated vision, the sense of action transmuted into possibilities that became more remote as he moved to make himself one of the amnesiac elite whom political power had made infallible and invincible. (*Salt* 250)

Despite his recognition of himself in the boy Peter from his teaching days, he never makes peace with that self that he spent his life avoiding. And, while Alford enters politics with pure intentions as evidenced in his "speeches which used to have, even in their confusion, a sense of wrestling with some truth," he, nonetheless, continues to construct, using politics to firmly ground that new self in the world, a self that rested sadly on repression of pain and fear (*Salt* 250).

Florence senses, however, that "he was not only seeking to change himself. He wanted to take her with him" (*Salt* 250). So, while he moves more deeply into his political persona, Florence initiates a subtle but mutually accepted separation to search for her authentic, creole identity in "that other place, other world where she could be herself, that self that she felt wanted to come out and be a self" (*Salt* 252). But, even with all the time spent apart and her search for that independent and fully realized self, "she remained [because] there

was no one he could trust around him... He had surrounded himself with new friends [and] somebody had to remain with him in this new place until he discovered what exactly he was doing" (*Salt* 253).

When Alford finally resigns from his political post, determined, nonetheless, to take the salute and give the feature address at Bango's march on Independence Day, "Florence knew that she could now afford to leave him" because "Alford had [finally] arrived" (*Salt* 254). In resigning from politics, Alford also surrenders "the perpetual disillusionment" of the political persona that had suffocated him for years (Ferguson 19). He finds not only the ability to pursue his real vision of welcoming and resistance of second-class citizenship as embodied in Bango's marches, but he also finds "his way...[to] a self" (*Salt* 254). And, with his discovery, Florence, too, finds the strength and the will to free herself from their pseudo-relationship, an act that holds "a thrill of release, a surprising and sober grandeur, as if in giving him himself she had begun to reclaim her own" (*Salt* 254). But, much like Bango's earlier discovery of Myrtle's quiet support and involvement, Alford, too, recognizes Florence's silent gift. Florence wants desperately to resist his plea to stay with him, but the genuine love that Alford expresses at that moment through the "calming tenderness" of his touch "mak[es] her feel herself someone discovered, someone new and precious that he wanted to cherish and to heal" (*Salt* 355). In finding themselves, they also find each other.

On the morning of the Independence march, Florence holds a Thanksgiving feast to reconnect with the roots that she had denied for so many years. Alford, too, partakes in this ceremony, the colors and smells of which serve to transport him back to his childhood when his mother held a very similar ceremony to get him to talk. And, while immersed in his memories, he finds a "part of his self that all at once he longed to recover, to reclaim and so reclaim a wholeness for himself. He strained to reach back to that child, to that past that he felt belonged to him" (*Salt* 256). His efforts at reclamation of self lead him to a more severely repressed loss of origin, "of that self beyond his reach in a faraway place," but "as a loss," it was one that "he had been deprived of" (*Salt* 256). And he asks himself, "how do you feel the loss of a self that you did not have to lose? How can you lose an Africa you did not know," but his feeling of "the loss of not having had that loss to lose" expresses one of several obstacles in establishing authentic, hybrid identity in a post-colonial context. For, as Frantx Fanon notes, "The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: *It is the racist who creates his inferior*" (93). As if to exonerate themselves, the colonial authorities actively ignored the severity of the situation and the need for reparation which intentionally promoted a subconscious belief that nothing had really happened. Those people enslaved and exploited by the colonial infrastructure never received the opportunity to feel or to recognize their loss, but Lovelace clearly explains through Alford's character that, in order to

actualize an authentic, hybrid identity in which creolization is acknowledged and celebrated, loss needs to be recognized as central to the colonial experience, reclaimed as a part of personal and cultural history, and liberated from years of repression. As Fanon notes further, "once [the person's] motivations have brought him into consciousness, [they] put him in a position to *choose* action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict—that is, toward the social structures" with which he must contend (100). Political and social attempts to move forward without coming to terms with the loss are futile as the historical loss must be reclaimed as a foundation on which to build a future.

As Alford salutes Bango and his marchers at the Independence Day parade, he suddenly realizes that

> Bango had kept that self that he, Alford, had lost. Bango had crossed the chasm into that past to link up with Jojo, to carry still his sense of violation after the granting of 'Emancipation' that neither acknowledged his injury nor addressed his loss. (*Salt* 257)

Bango has maintained the loss of his ancestors, admitting the self that stretched back to Africa and the torture of familial separation and colonial exploitation and refusing the status of second-class status that the facade of emancipation forced so many others into. And then Myrtle's frustration with Bango comes clear to Alford as he "fe[els] shame, at himself and his community that had left it to Bango alone to be outraged at the indignity its people continued to live under" (*Salt* 257). His natural response, not the refined performance of so many of his

past political speeches, first expresses "this shame" and then attempts to provoke "the whole community [in]to feel[ing] outrage at injustice and indignity and cowardice" and to make them aware of "the insult and indecency that had made their way from the past into their living day to day" (*Salt* 257). Alford wants the people to feel again, not to repress, to ignore or to wait passively, but to capitalize on the vital energy of their outrage to accelerate efforts at reparation, reform and progress. And then he asks, and Lovelace, too, asks, almost didactically,

> How can you free people... when every move you make is to get them to accept conditions of unfreedom, when you use power to twist and corrupt what it is to be human, when you ask people to accept shame as triumph and indignity as progress? What is power if power is too weak to take responsibility to uphold what it is to be human? (*Salt* 257)

As Alford comes home to his authentic, creole identity, he rejoins the people "from whom he had stood apart from the beginning, from whom he had tried to escape, to embrace his shame, to claim his outrage and so lay claim to a future of dignity" (*Salt* 258). The inextricable relationship between possessing self and community flows through the last several pages. In finding himself and his community, Alford is able to return "home" and to embrace both. When he finds that he is not alone "he [is] grateful to have arrived [and] to find" Bango and his band of marchers and all who supported the importance of this often

misunderstood act, "to join them to remove the guilt and shame we had our people labour under ever since Columbus landed and begin to construct the new world that we had been waiting on ever since Guinea John flew back to Africa" (*Salt* 258).

In *Salt*, Lovelace extends and amplifies the implications of the effects of both political and personal masks on authentic, hybrid identity, and he elucidates the direct relationship between self-emancipation and national independence. Rooted in the power of the government, the political mask possesses alarming authority to mislead and to delude through enthusiastic performances of ineffectual rhetoric and dazzling but inflated and impossible promises. Such shows of rhetorical performance mask the true intention of not only maintaining status quo, but also of preventing any real change and progress which could potentially threaten political prominence and power. As Tannis explains, "the leaders don't want things to change because confusion keep them in power" (*Salt* 190). Thus, while the political mask projects messages of unity and tolerance, it underhandedly encourages division and prejudice which actually keep it in power. Furthermore, to truly set the people free from the legacy of colonial oppression and of the correlative personal repression through something like land reform would destroy the idleness and stagnation cultivated by the political mask to protect its own tenuous position. Thus, the political mask destroys intentionally all avenues to an authentic, creole identity because

truly liberated and independent people cannot be controlled, "'and how'" can the political mask "'carry out [its] work without that control?'" (*Salt* 193).

Since the government will neither recognize nor address the existence of a problem, the novel spurs the people of the Caribbean to examine and deconstruct the personal masks of victimhood so that each person can take an active part in working towards reparation and integration, the essential elements for progress in a historical context of exploitation, abuse, injustice and indignity. Lovelace confronts the dangerous passivity created by the "strangling mask of victimhood" that allows the victim to shirk responsibility for self-improvement and wait passively and indefinitely for restitution for the wrongs done. In addition, these masks continue to divide, and, consequently, to impair the possibility for progress. Only the liberated individual can change the neocolonial second-class citizenship that is created and perpetuated by those power-wielding institutions such as schools and the government.

Central to this process, however, is admitting and reclaiming loss because as the narrator asserts, "the tragedy of our time is to have lost the ability to feel loss" (*Salt* 259). *Salt*, therefore, demonstrates that a future of dignity and genuine independence cannot be achieved until the past is unshackled from years of cultural and personal repression. Bango's marches exemplify the living connection with the "sense of violation after the granting of the 'Emancipation' that neither acknowledged his injury nor addressed his loss" (*Salt* 257). Through his annual reaffirmation of independence in the form of his marches, Bango

actively resists the lack of attention given to "their years of degradation and captivity and abuse [as] if they had been dogs that had been chained and were now going to be loosened to fend for themselves" (*Salt* 177). He alone holds tightly to the self that felt the loss while so many others accepted the second-class status that denied loss. Lovelace shows that the past of the Caribbean people, which includes a great void of loss, must be acknowledged, reclaimed and integrated into the structure of authentic, creole identity in order to make social amends.

Thus, this most recent of the three fictions in Lovelace's emerging vision of authentic, hybrid identity stresses the interdependence of self-emancipation and national liberation. As with the other texts, each individual must assume responsibility for self by shedding the variously different masks before true community can be achieved. Only after Alford "arrived at a self" by casting aside his political mask and coming to terms with his shame for neglecting his personal responsibility in helping to march the community towards progress and reparation does he possess the potential "to claim his outrage and so lay claim to a future of dignity" for both self and community (*Salt* 258). Furthermore, establishing authentic, creole identity affords possession, not rejection or repression, of community, as Alford discovers when, in releasing himself from his masks, "he find[s] his way back to the people from whom he had stood apart from the beginning, from whom he had tried to escape" (*Salt* 258). Thus the predicament of setting people and a nation free from historical terrors of

enslavement, indentured servitude, exploitation and abuse begins with individual responsibility for reclaiming loss, establishing authentic, hybrid identity through the destruction of masked identities, and never giving up on the march for true independence that is "for all our own lives... even if it [takes] us to the very end of time" (*Salt* 260).

Conclusion: Toward Independence and Freedom

Throughout the novels that I examine in this thesis, Lovelace illuminates the need to confront and to deconstruct the false identities of the Caribbean, many imposed as the result of the brutal history of colonization. The misleading force of the masks of colonial education, Carnival and victimhood prevent West Indians from building true individual and cultural identity. Through his prose, Lovelace exposes the various masks of the Caribbean and pursues an evolving vision of identity created by and for West Indians. This process, however, requires several fundamental steps that build upon each other to culminate in a meaningful and productive future. Lovelace elaborates progressively each of these steps in *The Schoolmaster*, *The Dragon Can't Dance*, and *Salt*, which not only serve as explorations of the damage caused by masking, but also stand as examples of how to move forward in working toward true identity.

The Schoolmaster sets the foundation for Lovelace's emerging vision of authentic identity. The tragedy and sin that disrupt the innocence of Kumaca reveal the crucial importance and responsibility of the individual in building cultural identity. While Lovelace does not "imply that the village should resist social change," he exposes the dangers of "Kumaca's first attempt to enter the world" without full and open participation by each of its citizens (Ramchand 10). Each individual in Kumaca bears responsibility for the good of the entire village, but, when carelessness, avarice and detachment enter the picture, the whole

community suffers. Lovelace clearly addresses the necessity of "selfless participation" by each individual for the possibility of community advancement and definition. Although the blind or manipulative actions of a single person will destroy a community, Lovelace also reveals the danger of passivity which he elaborates in the mask of victimhood in *Salt*. Consantine Patron, the voice of caution regarding the implications of introducing colonial education to the isolated village of Kumaca, bears a different but equally important responsibility for the destruction of Kumaca as much as some of his sinister neighbors. To dash any doubt about Consantine Patron's culpability for the fate of Kumaca, Lovelace accuses Patron directly in the last two pages of *Schoolmaster* through the voice of Father Vincent who explains that "Patron was the one who could have been of great assistance, but chose to stand by and look on" (*Schoolmaster* 170). Unquestionably, passivity contributes to the failure of society as much as blatant exploitation or zealotry. So, while Lovelace's concept of authentic identity begins with an examination of community dynamics, it quickly moves on to a study of the importance of honest, unmasked individual contribution. Finally, it is the individuals in *Schoolmaster*, not the community as a whole, who challenge and corrupt the defining heritage of Kumaca. As the individual takes center stage in the pursuit of authentic Caribbean identity, Lovelace amplifies the absolute prerequisites of self-discovery and self-affirmation.

In *Dragon*, Lovelace brings to light the effects of masking on self-possession and the quest for cultural and national identity. While the Carnival

mask exemplifies the indigenous artistry and creativity of the Caribbean, providing both release and renewal in its annual construction, Lovelace exposes the simultaneous imprisonment, or paradox, of the mask when used for self-definition. The entire parade of characters introduced in *Dragon* represses and denies core identity with their various masks. The stagnation of community caused by the detachment of masking runs through the entire novel. In the characters of Philo and Aldrick, however, the possibility for change and for true, creole identity comes in the form of painful introspection and self-assessment. Lovelace points not only to questioning, discovery, affirmation and, finally, possession as the building blocks to authentic identity, but he also begins to tear down inadequate ideologies. The mantra "all o' we is one" shouted throughout *Dragon* denies the value of the individual and the diversity of the Caribbean. If, in fact, self-possession represents the foundation to cultural and to national identity, then historical ideologies such as "all o' we is one" must be exposed and be revised as defining statements. The intangible and abstract ideas operating behind and driving a society need assessment as well as the individual, an aspect of the quest for authentic, hybrid identity that Lovelace tackles in *Salt*.

Lovelace's most recent novel of the three, *Salt*, combines and extends aspects of both of the other previous texts that I examine in this thesis in its evaluation of the effects of passivity, masking and ideology on identity. Throughout *Salt*, Lovelace exposes the governing bodies that promote a

neocolonial "secondclassness" by denying the history of human degradation and exploitation to guarantee a future of power. The characters, however, implicitly accept the state of second-class citizenry through the mask of victimhood which waits passively and indefinitely for change and reparation. The very nature of victimhood strangles the possibility for advancement or definition. Lovelace clearly condemns an ideology of equality through victimhood that has created the present state of stagnation and "unfreedom."

As a result, the process of establishing authentic, creole identity requires not only self-possession as demonstrated in both *Schoolmaster* and *Dragon,* but also reclaiming, liberating and incorporating the historical legacy of loss into self. The problem of setting people free who passively resist the responsibility of freedom rests on destroying the mask of victimhood and on recovering "the ability to feel [and claim] loss" (*Salt* 259). As Lovelace states in *Salt,* "we can't get nowhere until we settle accounts with history. We can't do nothing until we liberate ourselves from the victimhood that is strangling all of us here" (192). The "indignities of the past" must not be denied but embraced to realize authentic, hybrid identity and to secure a stable and a meaningful future (Sankar 38). Lovelace clarifies in *Salt* the inseparable relationship between self-possession and genuine national emancipation. Cultural ideologies that promote "conditions of unfreedom... and shame as triumph and indignity as progress" and political institutions that "use power to twist and corrupt what is to be human" absolutely require revamping, but Lovelace reemphasizes through the

characters of Bango Durity and, finally, of Alford that the ultimate responsibility for initiating reparation, fulfilling integration and building authentic, creole identity belongs to the individual *(Salt* 257).

While the colonial legacy of dehumanization and "deal[ing] with [the] past and things which have happened in the past" must be incorporated into a definition of authentic identity for the Caribbean, Lovelace's vision extends well beyond the historical and into the future (Sankar 41). Freedom and true identity, finally, can only be achieved through a "decolonisation of the mind" (Sunitha 123). The need to adopt new understandings of self and of nation through fresh perspective becomes central as the history of rejecting one's self as victim and as colonized subject has not served West Indians well. Indeed, the people of the Caribbean have suffered unspeakable atrocities, but Lovelace argues that true independence will never be achieved without an opening of the mind to break the "mental shackles of being second class" (Henry 24). Through his literary contributions, Lovelace creates a new psychological state wherein West Indians perceive themselves as rightful inheritors of the Caribbean, not the other but the one. The generations of people whose toils have broken and worked the land, who share a physical and mental connection with the land, are the true proprietors of the Caribbean. Thus, in the void of a unified, central history, Lovelace seeks to legitimize the past not only as a valid history, but also as a claim to the future of the Caribbean as "the past is inextricably bound to the present" (Henry 24). But while validating the past provides a foundation for the

future, only through the power of the voice and work of the individual can change, reparation and true identity, or "the self that want[s] to come out and be a self" be achieved. In an interview with H. Nigel Thomas, Lovelace once defined a slave as one "who gives up responsibility for his life and his future" (11). Through his voice, his works and his actions, Lovelace clearly demonstrates his unwavering commitment to resisting the state of the slave. In his vital contribution to creating and establishing authentic, hybrid West Indian identity, Lovelace also defines a state of true post-colonial independence and freedom.

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